

OCTOBER 2017

AFRICA

PLAYBOY

THE INTERVIEW: ◀

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OSWALT**

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BØRNS

+

CARS, CANS
AND MOTO GP

20Q: ◀

HALSEY

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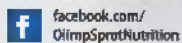
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A woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, is posing in the background. She is looking upwards and to the side, with her hands near her face.

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PLAYBILL

Brian B Hayes

An internationally renowned photographer whose work is published worldwide, Brian is mostly known for his glamour style photography. With over 25 years of shooting gorgeous models, Brian's work has graced the covers of top men's magazines worldwide. Brian also publishes a series of glamour calendars which are best sellers every year. You can find his work at BrianBHayes.com.



Rebecca Haithcoat

Most only dream of sharing sushi with RZA or doing shots with Lil Jon, but Haithcoat has made a career of parlaying candid moments into thoughtful portraits. In this issue she profiles R&B singer Jhené Aiko for Let's Play and goes deep with American singer Halsey for 20Q. "She's tough but dropped her guard almost immediately", she says of Halsey.



Timba Smits

Music facts and Halloween stats come to life in the Berlin-based illustrator's Drawn Data. Smits's penchant for pop culture began early, he says. "I won a sixth-grade competition for my super-rad-to-the-max illustration of Raphael, my favourite Ninja Turtle." That passion for drawing never left Smits and eventually enabled his thriving career.





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ON THE COVER *Parnia Porsche, Arthur St. John*

No 63 October 2017



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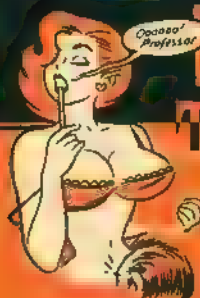


JHENE MKO

[illegible]

year-old son, "I was talking to myself out of my ass." I was so nervous, I was shaking. I was shaking with myself." She was inspired by her travels; in fact, the record has spawning album, *TRIP* (1999). "Where does it lead?" she asks. "It's inspired by anything."

SIGNIFICA, INSIGNIFICA, STATS AND FACTS



HARD TIMES

A U.K. survey found that some **31%** of polled university students would sleep with someone in exchange for a free education—if they were attracted to the benefactor; **16%** would make the trade with someone they weren't attracted to.

DOES MATTER

3,564 FEET: length of the world's longest walk-through horror "house" as of 2010—really a limestone cave in Lewisburg, Ohio. **80 FEET:** depth of the cave. **30,000:** number of bats estimated to live there.

SPELL BOUND

THE MOST-SEARCHED "HOW TO SPELL" WORD, BY STATE, ACCORDING TO GOOGLE:

California
BEAUTIFUL
Maryland
SPECIAL

Nevada
AVAILABLE
Pennsylvania
SAUERKRAUT

South Dakota
COLLEGE
Wisconsin
WISCONSIN

21: number of letters in the longest word in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. (The word was *electroencephalograph*, and the contestant got it right.)

BORN TO RUN 101

Real courses and the universities offering them this year:

Rutgers University
SPRINGSTEEN'S AMERICAN VISION
University of Michigan
FAKE NEWS, LIES AND PROPAGANDA

Harvard

THE REAL GAME OF THRONES:
From Modern Myths to Medieval Models

THE HALLOWEEN SPLURGE

\$8.4 BILLION: estimated amount Americans spent on **HALLOWEEN** candy and costumes last year (up nearly **22%** from 2015).



1.8 BILLION: pounds of pumpkins American farmers produced last year

7,000 YEARS: age of the oldest pumpkin seeds discovered to date

2,261.5 POUNDS: weight of the largest pumpkin ever grown in North America

DAMN

Median monthly pay of an intern working at:

Facebook: **\$8,000**
Microsoft: **\$7,100**
Amazon: **\$6,400**
Google: **\$6,000**

Average monthly American income: **\$4,280**

The U.N. OF CLOWNS

35-PLUS: number of countries represented in the World Clown Association. Lectures offered at the 2017 WCA Convention:



"Balloon Hutz," "Pocket Magic" and "Clowning in Disaster Areas"

Styles and STANS

Emerging musical genres, according to Spotify:

WITCH HOUSE, BAILE FUNK, DANGOUT, HOERSPIEL, SPEED GARAGE

17: years it took the word *stan* to enter the Oxford English Dictionary after Eminem and Dido released

stan (n., informal)
an overzealous or obsessive fan of a particular celebrity.
Oxford English Dictionary

The OED says

Private Dancers

34 percent of men refuse to dance in public.

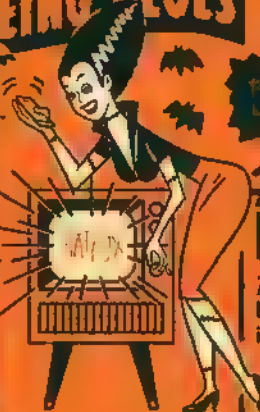
CLEARED TAKEOFF

Tinder says that pilots get the most right swipes of any profession.

BINGEING BLUES

NEARLY 90% of millennials binge-watch TV shows; almost **40%** of them do it on a weekly basis. But the shows may not have their full attention:

99% of millennials say they multitask while watching TV.



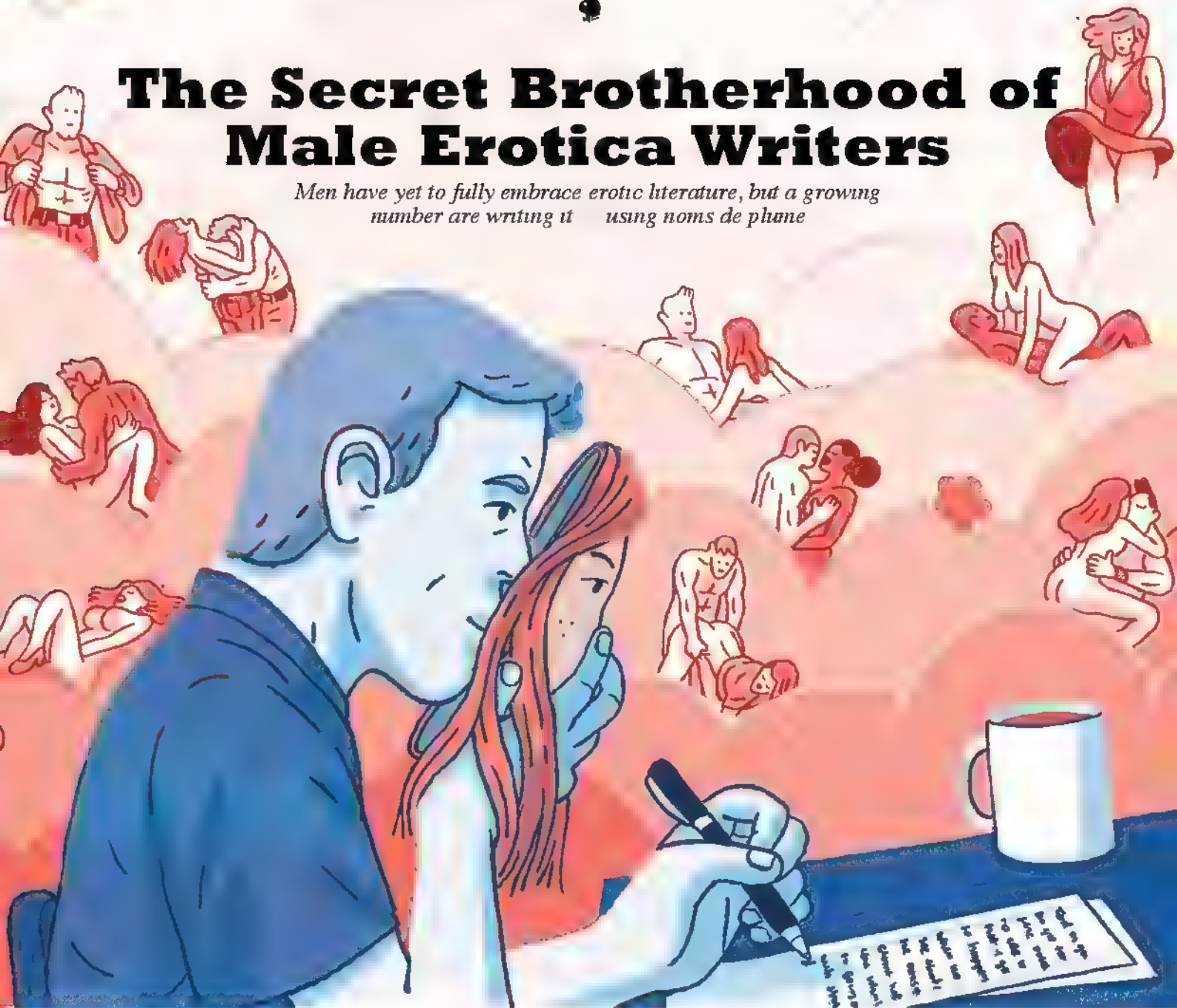
Phone HOME

70: percentage of women who believe smartphones negatively interfere with their main relationship. average number of times **18-to-24-year-olds** check their phone each day



The Secret Brotherhood of Male Erotica Writers

Men have yet to fully embrace erotic literature, but a growing number are writing it using noms de plume



Before Chance Carter, 36, wrote the best-selling book *Bad Boy Daddy*, he'd published erotic stories for two years under a female pseudonym — until a female erotica writer reportedly accused him on Facebook of misleading readers. She claimed that men working in the genre under women's names were cowardly and immoral.

So Carter adopted a new pseudonym, one undeniably male, and found stardom. According to Carter, he has regularly ranked among the top 100 self-published writers on Amazon ever since. *Bad Boy Daddy*

boasts more than 2500 reviews and spent a week on top of the online retailer's list of best-selling self-published e-books.

It has been suggested that women prefer female authors when it comes to erotica because men don't understand how to craft a good, sexually charged story. That theory is based, in part, on the fact that men don't consume such writing. A 2014 Nielsen survey for Romance Writers of America, for example, found that only 18 percent of romance-book readers are male.

Ogi Ogas, a computational neuro scientist and

co-author of *A Billion Wicked Thoughts: What the Internet Tells Us About Sexual Relationships*, believes this may be because of fundamental differences in the male and female brains. "One of the most basic differences is that the male brain responds to any single sexual stimulus. A nice chest, two girls kissing, older women", Ogas told Time.com. "Female desire requires multiple stimuli. For a guy, the most common form of [masturbation material] is a 60-second porn clip. For a woman, it can be a 250-page novel ... Stories have greater flexibility to offer a greater variety of stimuli."

Carter's reason for originally adopting a

By **JENNIFER BILLOCK**

ILLUSTRATION BY T.M. PEACOCK

Erotica's CHECKERED PAST

female name is akin to the reason JK Rowling's abbreviated name appears on the cover of the *Harry Potter* books. Her publisher reportedly didn't think young men would want to read a book about a boy wizard written by a woman. "For centuries, female writers in male dominated genres had to take male pen names to get published", says LN Bey, a male erotica author who publishes under a gender-neutral name. Bey thinks doing so is only fair, as do other male writers. Carter says he runs a 400-person group for romance and erotica writers that is an even split of men and women, the authors' pen names are 99 percent female-sounding.

"This is still a socially risky and stigmatised business, perhaps even more so for men", Bey says. "Many women won't read male authors because of the perception that their work will be misogynistic, 'get on your knees, b*tch' stories that lack a deeper psychological aspect."

Gender aside, erotica writers tend to be hush-hush about their work for a variety of reasons. Robert Fleming, who describes himself as the first editor to compile an anthology of erotic short fiction by African-American male writers (*After Hours*), adopted the pen name Cole Riley to distance his creative writing from his work as a journalist with bylines in *The New York Times* and *Essence*. Like many others, Fleming fell into

erotica by chance. He says he got his first job in the genre after talking with the Editor in Chief of *Ou*, a magazine of nude photography (and former *Playboy* publication), in an elevator. "It introduced me to an entirely different world", he says. "I was having the time of my life."

M. Christian, who has been published in *The Best American Erotica*, writes in the genre to expand his palate. "I can experiment with all kinds of storytelling techniques", he says. "I've learned that it's essential to stretch yourself so you don't get stale creatively—or personally." Christian doesn't use a pseudonym to protect his reputation; he uses one simply because he doesn't like his real name.

According to Carter, fake names help create an author's brand. "If I wanted to write a Western, I'd slap a name on it that sounds vaguely Western", he says. "Without pen names, your entire writing career would be discoverable whenever someone looked you up. No one reading my erotica is interested in the law essays I wrote 10 years ago."

For now at least, erotica is one of the very few industries in which men are at a disadvantage. "It's hard putting a man's name on a sexy novel when the charts are filled with books by women", Carter says. "It's like riding a bicycle to a Harley convention."

A LONG STORY SHORT

These three passages will give you a rough sense of erotica's quality spectrum

THE GOOD

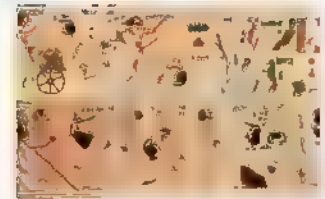
New York Times best-selling novelist Alessandra Torre makes even us blush in her 2013 book *Sex Love Repeat*: "'You are mine', he grunts out, pumping into me, the length and level of his arousal brutal. He doesn't slow the movement, giving me full, hard thrusts, my breasts bouncing from the top of my dress, the murmur above the sink giving me a full view of my slutdom. Paul, in worn jeans, a white T-shirt, light hair mussed, mouth open, intensity over his face."

THE BAD

Erin De Luca, author of *The Day Before Happiness*, won *Literary Review's* Bad Sex in Fiction Award thanks to this excerpt: "With a swerve of her hips, she turned me over and I was on top of her. She opened her legs, pulled up her dress and, holding my hips over her, pushed my prick against her opening. I was her plaything, which she moved around. Our sexes were ready, poised in expectation, barely touching each other, ballet dancers hovering en pointe."

THE WEIRD

Chuck Tingle turns Bernie Sanders into a sex symbol named Bernie Sambers in *Feeling the Bern in My Butt*: "While most politicians craft messages that tug at my heartstring, these seem to go even farther. He's tugging at my butt. I have to admit, all of this political positivity is getting to me, the message of progress and social reform causing a pleasant tingle to slowly form around the trim of my anus. It's a strange but welcome sensation, something of a burn, but in a warm and inviting way."



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EGYPTIANS CREATE THE FIRST EROTIC PAPYRUS DUBBED THE 'WORLD'S FIRST MEN'S MAG'. LONG HOUSED AT ITALY'S MUSEO EGIZIO.



1749

JOHN CLELAND PUBLISHES *FANNY HILL*, ONE OF THE EARLIEST EXAMPLES OF A PORNOGRAPHIC NOVEL WRITTEN IN ENGLISH.



2015

FIFTY SHADES OF GREY BREAKS RECORDS WORLDWIDE, ULTIMATELY RAKING IN \$571 MILLION AT THE GLOBAL BOX OFFICE.



Doris Rumesberger

RENE WINKLINGER

4IMMA PHOTOGRAPHY





About me

I am very sensitive, empathic, caring, a little daydreamer and perfectionist.

My hobbies and interests

My lovely daughter, traveling and visiting new places, nature swimming, vegan food, beauty and fitness.

My goals and career ambitions

One of my goals was becoming a playmate, so I have to find a new one now. Most important for me is spending time with my loved ones, being healthy, happy and learning to enjoy every moment. By the way, it would be nice having a house at the beach someday.

Who inspires me

My daughter. Children are gorgeous, because they can live for the moment and they can rejoice about little things.

My favourite quote

Live with memories, not dreams.

Turn on

If a man is kind with children and animals, a sense of humour, a beautiful toned body, men with muscular arms, good behaviour and a protective instinct.

Turn off

Lying, cheating, smoking, laziness, untidiness.

The perfect date

Something romantic, candle light, beach and a gentleman.

My girl crush

There are a lot of gorgeous women, maybe some other playmates like my lovely friend Eva Lutz and German playmate Heide Muro. They are very beautiful, but also kind and have a good character.

My favourite food

Everything vegan, pasta, Italian food, sweets.

My biggest fear

It is not good to have fears, because you will attract them then.

One destination I'd love to visit

Caribbean islands.

For more of Doris' adventures you can follow her on Instagram @doris_rumesberger or on Facebook at Doris Rumesberger.

A full-page photograph of a woman with long, wavy blonde hair sitting on a large, weathered log on a beach. She is wearing a white bikini top with a scalloped edge and a matching white bikini bottom. She is looking down and slightly to her left. The background shows a sandy beach, some greenery, and a blue sky. In the top left corner, there is a small white box containing text.

Height: 168 cm
Weight: 50 kg
Eye colour: Blue-grey











MUSIC

Live Through This

Young rapper Vic Mensa has already cheated death more than most of us will in a lifetime, and his debut album tells a thrilling story of survival

By most actuarial metrics, Vic Mensa shouldn't be alive. He shouldn't be collaborating with Pharrell, Kanye West and Weezer. And JAY-Z, his Roc-A-Fella label boss, shouldn't be raving to roomfuls of industry VIPs that the 24-year-old from the South Side of Chicago is an "incredible once-in-a-lifetime artist."

But Mensa, born Victor Mensah, isn't supine in a pine box, as stiff as the Joey Ramone leather jackets he sports. He's vibrantly alive, prone to swift, panther-like movements and spasmodic festival-crowd incitement. He's passionate enough to publicly indict YouTube star DJ Akademiks for mocking the violence that has plagued his hometown of Chicago. After half a decade of hype, the biracial son of two educators is finally on the verge of stardom, and his debut, *The Autobiography*, chronicles the obstacles that nearly caused permanent derailment.

"I don't feel lucky as much as I feel predestined", Mensa says. "I've been putting energy into the universe for some time from an honest place, and I've done it with good intentions and a lot of determination."

The South Side native's talent has taken him further than almost anyone could have predicted back when the teenage Mensa formed the SaveMoney Crew alongside childhood friends Chance the Rapper and Joey Purp. But whether you call it destiny, providence or just random chance, Mensa survived a streak of freak accidents that could have laid Rasputin to rest.

At 17, the skateboarding and graffiti-writing rebel attempted to sneak into Lollapalooza, only to fall off a 30-foot bridge and land on a fence charged with 15,000 volts. As he raps on the elegiac "Memories on 47th St", "The doctor said

I should be dead, still alive and still ain't scared/In the hospital bed, writing these rhymes in my head"

Two years later, when he was the lead singer for Kids These Days, Chicago's much buzzed-about genre-straddling ensemble, Mensa totalled his mother's car on the expressway after he clipped a pole and sent the vehicle spinning out of control. With their debut album slated to be produced by Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, the group subsequently broke up just as they were about to sign a lucrative major-label deal.

Then there was the toxic relationship that came to an unusual end when, Mensa says, an ex-girlfriend broke into his Los Angeles house, went after another woman who was there, destroyed property and had to be escorted out by police.

"It was a soap opera, 100 percent", he says. Mensa spun the incident into *The Autobiography*'s "Homewrecker", whose refrain "I should've known better/But who'd've ever thought

you'd be the wifey and a homewrecker" uses the titular word in the most literal sense. The song features Rivers Cuomo crooning a hook that lends the feeling of a Love & Hip Hop version of Pinkerton. Raised on 1990s alternative rock and rap, Mensa counts Weezer and Kurt Cobain among his most prominent inspirations — hence the Nirvana tattoo on his arm.

"When I played Rivers the original demo, his reaction was, 'Wow, I need a girlfriend like that'", Mensa says, laughing.

None of this accounts for the most crucial biographical statistic working against Mensa. He's a young black man raised amid the antebellum street warfare and political hysteria of Chicago. During this past Fourth of July weekend alone, more than 100 people were shot — nearly

all of them people of colour living on the city's West and South sides.

"This album deals with the trauma of losing people in the street", Mensa says. "Chicago violence is sensationalised and used as a headline for everyone's benefit except the community itself. Our people are depicted as animals. I was trying to humanise us."

The numbing body count takes the form of Mensa's slain friend Cam, a.k.a. DARE, on "Heaven on Earth". The ghost of another murdered friend, Rodney Kyles Jr, casts a similar pall over the record. But what helps give the album its power isn't merely these canticles for the deceased but the way Mensa depicts the subtle ramifications on his psyche.

In an effort to cope with fame, industry pressures and grief, Mensa developed a debilitating drug addiction. Switching from psychedelics to MDMA to Adderall, he became dependent on illicit substances to fuel his creativity and ultimately burned out. Last year he went clean.

His debut record strikes an equilibrium between the roiling chaos of those first 23 years, the sober focus of the past 12 months and the madness and tensions engulfing the zeitgeist. After innumerable brushes with the end, Mensa is finally ready to begin.

"People often misinterpret me as being mean or angry all the time — or maybe they think I'm a thug", he says. "But honestly, I'm just trying to put as much of myself down on record so I can be interpreted for the man I am. Sure, I'm angry sometimes about what's going on around me, but I'm angry for a reason. I'm a product of my environment. And I'm trying to make that environment better."

TOP FIVE

Vic Mensa on his favourite albums of 2017 (so far)

Radiohead, *OKNOTOK*

OK Computer was a ready one of my favourite albums, but to hear songs like "Man of War" and "Lift" from those original sessions is just incredible. I've been singing them a million times.

JAY-Z, *4:44*

I've been a fan of Jay for about 12 years, and *4:44* is revealing in a way that has never been before. He's always been so veiled with fast hand movements and slick talk, but this is

much less coded and a lot more personal and honest.

Ho9909, *United States of Horror*

Just a dope-ass hardcore rap band. Their album is powerful, energetic, honest, political and strong. I went to the live show and was in the mosh pit. Love these guys.

Kendrick Lamar, *DAMN.*

Kendrick's album hit you like an extended-release pill. You take it, and

after however much time it takes, you really start to understand it. It's interesting how much it unfolds and spreads and starts to take shape as you keep listening.

Vince Staples, *Big Fish Theory*

I wasn't expecting the electronic production, but I think it's really strong. It's dope how he takes his stories — which are a way from the perspective of a Long Beach Crip — over that type of musical backdrop.

VARS
17



B



POLITICS

THE CHANGING TUNE OF PROTEST MUSIC

In the age of Twitter and Trump, can a politically charged song still make a difference?

Chuck D is shouting at me, and it's making me want to set a cop car on fire

I'm driving through the north side of Chicago, blasting "Hal to the Chief." The song is from the new self-titled record by Prophets of Rage, a supergroup consisting of the former Public Enemy frontman, Cypress Hill's B-Real and three-fourths of Rage Against the Machine. It isn't just a great excuse to drive too fast while pounding the steering wheel, it feels like a gasp of oxygen during a politically suffocating time.

But a funny thing happens when you sing along to songs that demand you fight back. You start to wonder if we've entered a new golden age of protest music or if we're just stuck in our little bubbles, each with its own scathing soundtrack. "What the f*ck are you waiting for?" the Prophets ask in "Unf*ck the World." Good question.

Whatever your political leanings, there are pop songs out there to prop you up. Most of them are anti-Trump, from Jack Johnson's "My Mind Is for Sale," which rails against "paranoid 'us against them' walls" to Fiona Apple's relatively self-explanatory "Tiny Hands." The pickings are slimmer on the support-our-president side, but you can sing along to Joy Villa's summer hit "Make America Great Again!" while wearing any of the pro-Trump T-shirts being peddled on Kid Rock's website. (And given the fact that the Devil Without a Cause announced, just before press time, that he's running for the Senate, we might be in for a patriotic rap-rock album any day now.)

Chuck D is hopeful that Prophets of Rage can be more than just a reason for young men to mosh righteously. "You listen to Roy Orbison's 'Pretty Woman' and it makes you want to get with some fly girl," he explains. "Why can't it be the same with protest music? If a song speaks to your soul and mind and body, then it can change you."

I love his conviction. I grew up singing along with it—but in 2017 it seems almost quaint. During the 1960s and 1970s, when music was a countercultural force in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movements, "more people were involved in disseminating the message in ways that the music bolstered," says Eric

Kasper, a political scientist and co-author of *Don't Stop Thinking About the Music: The Politics of Songs and Musicians in Presidential Campaigns*. That's not happening today, he says, thanks mostly to the internet. We all stay in our respective trenches, surfacing only to lob rage-bombs at others. A protest song that doesn't preach to the choir doesn't have a chance. When Bob Dylan wrote "Masters of War," he didn't have to worry about being dismissed as fake news.

"In the 1960s, I believed rock music was the most powerful communicating force in human history," says Wayne Kramer, founding member and lead guitarist for MC5, a Detroit punk band

By **ERIC SPITZNAGEL**

so radical that FBI director J. Edgar Hoover allegedly told President Gerald Ford its members "breathe revolution." Kramer's opinions have softened in recent years. "I don't really believe that music leads to political change anymore," he says. "Politics and the building of civilization is serious business. It's immune to troubadours and poets." It's a little disconcerting to hear this from a guy who performed outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention at the request of notorious "yippie" Abbie Hoffman, playing for eight hours before the gathering devolved into a police riot.

He's right about politics being serious business—but then, so is politically charged music. When Compton hip-hop artist YG released the single "FDT (F*ck Donald Trump)" in 2016, it didn't get much attention other than a call from the Secret Service. But after the election, the song jumped 435 percent, to 3.1 million US streams, and sold more than 4000 downloads in a matter of days.

Villa had a similar sales bump for music with a different sentiment. After she walked

the Grammys red carpet in a dress with Make America Great Again and Trump bedazzled across it, the Amazon sales rank for her EP *I Make the Static* jumped from number 543,503 to number one in a single night. Villa tells us that "Make America Great Again!" (which was released over the Fourth of July holiday) is meant to "encourage people to reach across party lines." Okay, but naming a song after a slogan from a historically divisive campaign seems less like an olive branch than a "we won, so shut your loser hole" sing-along. Then again, was "Yes We Can", Will.i.am's 2008 tribute to Barack Obama, really all that different?

Kramer, who once thought music could spawn a revolution, today thinks that's asking too much. "It can be like a town hall," he says of protest rock. "It's not going to change any minds. It's just a way to come together and voice our frustrations, and I think that's plenty." Chuck D echoes the sentiment. The man who once told us to fight the power also hopes his music can be "a beacon for



"What country music do you mean—my country or your country?"

people, to let them know, hey, you don't have to be afraid."

So maybe there is power in pumping our fists along to Prophets of Rage as they tell us to "Stand up and rise like the tide!" It doesn't make me join an angry mob and storm the White House; it just makes me feel a little less crazy and alone. Sometimes that's enough.



J.DIVINE



KRISTINA GABRIELLE

— ROCK — LUIS GOMEZ — 37 STUDIOS —





About me

I am an underground Cable Analyst (total nerd style) and I love learning new things. I am an easy-going country girl who also fits in well in a big city. You can take me anywhere.

My hobbies and interests

I love anything to do with fitness. Working out has always been a way for me to both relieve stress and to gain confidence. In my off time, you can find me enjoying nature, whether it's going on a hike, kayaking or something more extreme. I enjoy music from Taylor Swift to Marilyn Manson, and myself have sung in many bands at various venues. I'm independent, but I like having a man by my side to make the ride more fun.

My goals and career ambitions

I am always striving to learn more about fields I know nothing or very little about. I want to travel the world, become a well-known model, and be trilingual by the time I'm retired.

Who inspires me

I'm inspired by those who have all the odds stacked against them yet never make excuses. Those who move forward through adversity with a smile and unstoppable drive that motivates me.

My favourite quote

Be fearless in the pursuit of what sets your soul on fire.

Turn on

Someone who takes the time to get to know me. Also, an intelligent, well-dressed man who takes care of himself.

Turn off

A lack of confidence.

The perfect date

I would love to go on an outdoor adventure with someone, then go to a casual place to get to know each other at ease, then save the dressed-up fancy date thing for once we are comfortable.

My girl crush

Scarlett Johansson and Charlize Theron.

My favourite food

Sushi and Thai.

My biggest fear

Getting a life-threatening disease.

One destination I'd love to visit

The Maldives or Greece.

I'm not embarrassed to say

I am an absolute loser when it comes to my sense of humour. Like a child, own it though.

For more of Kristina's journeys you can follow her on Instagram @kristina.gabrielle





Light: 68k
Camera: Bro









PLAYBOY INTERVIEW:

PATTON OSWALT

A candid conversation with the comedian, actor and social media maestro on how he carved a path out of unthinkable tragedy and found his way back to the stage

There are many ways you could describe the life of Patton Oswalt over the past year and a half. "Normal" is not one of them.

Consider: On April 21, 2016, Oswalt, an award-winning stand-up comedian and actor known for, among many other things, his nine years on the CBS sitcom *The King of Queens* and for voicing Remy in the animated hit *Ratatouille*, found that his wife of nearly 11 years had died in her sleep in their Los Angeles home. The sudden passing of crime writer Michelle McNamara, 46, sparked outpourings of support for Oswalt and his and McNamara's then seven-year-old daughter, Alice, from fans, celebrities and total strangers the world over.

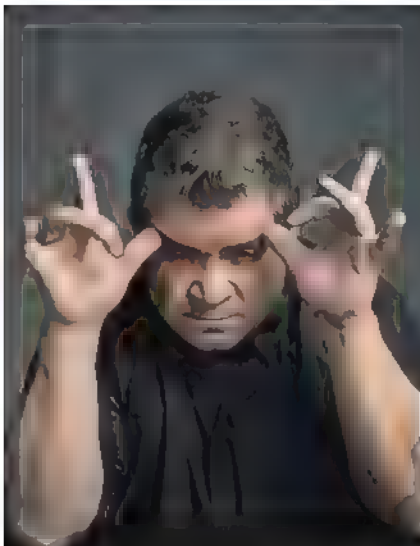
On August 1, 2016, Oswalt, who for years has touched on his struggles with depression and anx-

ity in his stand-up routines, took to social media to grieve. He wrote on Facebook about how "102 days at the mercy of grief and loss feels like 102 years and you have shit to show for it." But even then he was able to offer a glimmer of hope: "I'm going to start telling jokes again soon. And writing. And acting in stuff and making things I like and working with friends on projects and do all the stuff I was always so privileged to get to do before the air caught fire around me and the sun died. It's all I knew how to do before I met Michelle. I don't know what else I'm supposed to do now without her."

On February 3, 2017, Oswalt revealed in a statement released to the Associated Press that, according to a report from the coroner's office, Michelle McNamara's death was caused by an undiag-

nosed artery-blocking heart condition, "combined with her taking the medications Adderall, Xanax and the pain medication fentanyl." Nine days later, when he won a Grammy for best comedy album for *Talking for Clapping* (he had won an Emmy for the same special the previous September), he called the award "bittersweet" but added, "I'm hoping to move beyond the bitterness."

On July 6, 2017, Oswalt announced his engagement to actress Meredith Salenger, 47, having recently tweeted, "Every time you choose love it delays the apocalypse." The couple's nerdy, charming social media repartee awakened even some cynics' faith in the restorative power of love. For the haters—Oswalt called them out as "grub worms"—the news of the relationship provided a nasty field day. Both Oswalt and Salenger re-



*"I was a f*cking loudmouth. I got beaten up a few times, but if I'm going to look back on it honestly, maybe I needed to get my ass kicked because I was running my mouth."*



"In talking specifically, I accidentally tripped into something universal. People who are going through this have been writing me, and they've helped me."



"For all the things I can point out about people like Trump, Ann Coulter and these alt right MRA douchebags, I see that same jealousy, resentment and trauma in myself."

Photography by **PATRICK MAUS**



posted young widow and blogger Erica Roman's defence of their relationship and engagement. "You don't get to comment on the choices of a widower while you sit happily next to your own living spouse", Roman wrote. "You didn't have to stand and watch your mundane morning turn into your absolute worst nightmare." It went viral. These days, Oswalt sounds a bit more optimistic. In addition to a characteristically full dance card — the upcoming dramatic film *Nostalgia*, the edgy new NBC comedy series *A.P. Bio*, possible returns to *Veep* and *Mystery Science Theater 3000* — he will confront the trials of his recent life in a new comedy special, taped by Netflix and never to be repeated onstage. If there is salvation and renewal in work, Oswalt just may find it.

Born Patton Peter Oswalt on January 27, 1969 in Portsmouth, Virginia, Oswalt, along with his younger brother, Matt, was raised a well-travelled military brat. Obsessed with comic books, records, films and Dungeons & Dragons paraphernalia, Oswalt grew up in Sterling, Virginia and obtained an English degree from the College of William and Mary, where he was a member of the Phi Kappa Tau fraternity. Either in the late 1980s or early 1990s, according to his own foggy memory, he began performing stand-up. Influenced by Jonathan Winters, Richard Pryor, Bill Hicks, Steve Martin and others, he immediately knew where he was going.

Oswalt's quick-spreading reputation as a cranky, shrewdly observational comic speedball helped win him a gig writing for *MADtv* from 1995 to 1997. That in turn led to a 1997 episode of HBO's *Comedy Half-Hour*, in which he muses on looking like a lesbian, obsesses over little people and waxes ecstatic about Xena: Warrior Princess. His career-making gig on *The King of Queens* started in 1998 and was followed by supporting roles in projects ranging from the arty (*Magnolia*) to the asinine (*A Very Harold & Kumar 3D Christmas*). He has penned comic books (*Batman 600*) and memoirs (*Zombie Spaceship Wasteland* in 2011 and *Silver Screen Friend* in 2015), he has doctored screenplays for DreamWorks Animation, and he's served as off-screen narrator for ABC's *The Goldbergs*. You get the sense that work became his salvation long before the horrors of 2016.

We sent writer **Stephen Rebello**, who interviewed Christopher Nolan for our last issue — and Oswalt himself for a 2014 *20Q* — to Soho House West Hollywood on the Sunset Strip, where he and Oswalt talked for hours over Clean Green smoothies and nice porridge, before detouring toward strong cups of coffee and fattening

bread and spreads. Rebello reports: "It didn't surprise me that the Patton Oswalt I met four years ago has evolved. Brought to his knees by personal tragedy, he has emerged stronger and every bit as irreverent, authoritative and entertaining on virtually any topic, from the 19th century's gloomiest Russian literature to the arcane comic genius of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*. The pain in his eyes is unmistakable, and he may laugh less frequently these days, but when he does, it's infectious. His withering scorn for politicians on both sides of the aisle is intact, and his lashing deconstructions of pop culture and his celebrity grudges are tempered by a different sort of reflection, you could even call it balance. If you ask me, Oswalt's greatest work lies ahead."

**Grief is like,
"Hey, depression,
I taught you
everything you
know, but I didn't
teach you everything
I know."**

PLAYBOY: When people approach you these days, do they want to meet the stand-up comedian, the voice from *Ratatouille*, the social media wit or someone else?

OSWALT: If I had to make a pie chart, a big part of it is still *The King of Queens*. That show is on all the time, and it really holds up. I remember the creators, Michael Weithorn and David Litt, and the writers saying they wanted each episode to be a solid, funny stand-alone short film about life. None of the characters really learns anything. There's a reason shows like *MASH*, *Cheers*, *Friends* and *Seinfeld* have this afterlife. Each one is a little midget — there's no better word for it — of entertainment. People can just kick back and recharge. I loved doing that show.

PLAYBOY: You're currently shooting a co-starring role as a school principal on *A.P. Bio*, a new NBC comedy series created by Seth Meyers, Michael O'Brien and Lorne Michaels. When you do a new series, do you tend to compare it to your nine years on *The King of Queens*?

OSWALT: I hope it turns out to be the same kind of environment we had on *King of Queens*. All the writers and executive producers on that show

were hilarious f*cking stoners and goofballs. They were trying to do funny little stories, they weren't out to change the goddamn world. For sweeps week one year early on in the series, they did an arc where Carrie [played by Leah Remini] might have a baby, and then they lose the baby. Kevin James and the writers were all going, "This is not why we did this f*cking show." So, the three-episode arc for the next sweeps week was the characters finding mould in the basement, hiring a guy to get the mould out and then finding out it's going to cost too much. That was a way of saying, "F*ck, that's our sweeps-week story mould in the basement."

We would hide all kinds of in-jokes on *King of Queens* that people are just now starting to discover. It reminds me of what *The Book of Mormon* did for Broadway musicals. Structurally, that show is completely not subversive, it's traditional. On *King of Queens*, they used a standard sitcom structure to slip in all kinds of weird stuff. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* does the same thing. It covers deep life stuff but in ways you don't realise.

PLAYBOY: For instance?

OSWALT: On *King of Queens* there was this great story where Jerry Stiller's character, Arthur, reads about reparations, so he gives \$200 to the character Deacon, played by Victor Williams, who is black.

Arthur says, "I just need to say that I contributed to my reparations", and Deacon says, "Oh wow, thanks, man." Arthur finds out later that his family were immigrants — no money, never owned slaves. He goes to Deacon and says, "Going to need that \$200 back", and Deacon goes, "Well, I spent it on new speakers." Then Arthur says, "Eh, that's typical." On *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* the character played by Donna Lynne Champlin is in a bake-off, and she's sure this unbeatable baker has some secret ingredient. She's determined to find out what it is but realises it's just butter and the woman is just a better baker than she is. That applies to so much in life. Sometimes half-hour shows like these and *Veep* tackle issues with goofiness and slapstick. That's better than the hour-long shows that announce they're doing it and it's like they're patting themselves on the back.

PLAYBOY: So, you're saying viewers want to be entertained first. If a statement or "message" is going to be imparted, it's better when it's smuggled in.

OSWALT: Go back to the Westerns of the late 1940s and 1950s like *Red Rover*, *3 10 to Yuma* and *The Tall T* and you'll see gay themes. They were smuggling these themes in, and seeing these



movies now we're like, "Are you kidding? How dumb were people back then?" *3 10 to Yuma* has Glenn Ford lying on a bed in a bridal suite, and there's Van Heflin, and Ford says something like "You seem real strong. You'd be real helpful in our gang. I don't why you're stuck on that boring old farm with that woman" *The Tall T* is about a failed romance between Randolph Scott and Richard Boone, who aren't brave enough to come out of the closet. Scott goes and marries a woman and even says something like "She ain't much to look at, but oh well", which is like saying, "I guess I'll just put on this f*cking beard"

PLAYBOY: When you watch those movies, do you ever wonder which actors were and which weren't in the know?

OSWALT: The way Glenn Ford plays it, he had to have known. Van Heflin might not have. Randolph Scott may have known, because I think he was bi.

PLAYBOY: You're referring to the fact that Scott and Cary Grant shared a Santa Monica beach house and a house in Los Feliz in the 1930s and how it has been widely written about and speculated that they were lovers hiding in plain sight, some say for well over 11 years

OSWALT: And by the way, even if I wasn't gay but I was living with Cary Grant and he wanted me to fuck him, I would. I could be married and I would still say to my wife, "It's Cary Grant. I mean, Jesus, sweetie" And my wife would go, "Oh, you get over there right now and f*ck Cary Grant. Hell yeah, go ahead. Have fun, guys"

PLAYBOY: It's good to hear you laugh. You've been very up-front about the time you've had since April of last year

OSWALT: I'm quoting the first line of CS Lewis's *A Grief Observed*. "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear." It's terrifying. It's f*cking terrifying.

PLAYBOY: Aside from terror, what have you experienced about grief?

OSWALT: Dude, the thing you know once you go through real chronic grief — in fact, my very first instinct was to think, I don't want anyone to go through what I'm going through right now. I wouldn't even want Donald Trump to go through what I'm feeling right now. That's how awful it is.

PLAYBOY: How have you and your daughter helped each other over the past year and a half?

OSWALT: This is going to sound selfish, but I'm forever glad that I have Alice. If I hadn't had a daughter and my wife died, we wouldn't be talking right now. I'm not saying I would be dead, but I would be a shut-in alcoholic. Everything would

have shut down. I wouldn't have been about anything. But with Alice, it was and is "You got to get up". There are mornings when we're late to school because I'm sad, but I've still f*cking got to get up. A night when I've had maybe one scotch with some friends, I'll say, "That's it. I've got to take her to school tomorrow". If there were no reason to wake up, I would be morbidly obese. I'd be re-watching movies I've seen a million times, and I would have wallowed and sealed myself off in a falsely comforting bath of despair. Depression is not terrifying. Depression is seductive and comforting. It sticks around so long because it creates this false sense of "Oh, here's where I'm safe". Grief is like depression's drill sergeant. It knows the tricks that depression doesn't know. Grief is like, "Hey, depression, I taught you everything

There were moments when I was like, "I have plenty of evidence that I'm dead right now. Should I test this?"

you know, but I didn't teach you everything I know. Here, watch what I can do"

PLAYBOY: What's tougher to deal with, your own sadness or your daughter's?

OSWALT: The first few weeks were a little rough. There was crying at night, but she bounced back. She's a really happy little kid, and she goes to this thing called Our House, a fantastic grief group for kids. But there were times when I got really worried, like what if she's just putting on a show for me, trying to be brave but inside she's dying? There were times when she was a little kid in a house with a father who was sort of shut down and having trouble talking. There were times when I had to get her to play a game on her iPad or start a little project, and then I would say, "Oh, let me go upstairs", and I would go put my head in a pillow and just scream and cry because I didn't want to break down in front of her. She wanted to go back to school the Monday after Michelle died, and there were a lot of times those first few months when I would take her to school, pull around the block and just park and have my coffee. I'd have some books, and I would just sit

there all day. I'd tell the teacher, "If anything goes wrong, call me or text me and I'll just run right over". I didn't want to leave. I just wanted to sit out there and wait. I know that kids go through sad stuff and scary stuff, so I called in favours like you wouldn't believe just to give her little special moments. Yes, that was a bit of show-biz privilege, but f*ck it. If you've got it, use it.

PLAYBOY: Was it ever worse for you when you were alone?

OSWALT: I would seriously have these existential moments — not to get too dramatic — when I was like, "What if I'm the one who has died and my brain can't deal with the body horror of it, so it has created this whole other life where Trump is president, where reality doesn't make sense? What if I'm imagining my daughter here right

now and I have to protect her but she's not really here? All this could be something that I created". It was freaking me out. There were moments when I truly was like, "I have plenty of evidence that I'm dead right now. Should I test this? Should I try to *Matrix* myself out of this and step in front of a bus or stab myself or something to see if this is real?"

PLAYBOY: Did you and Alice move to another house?

OSWALT: I re-decorated a little, but I just thought, I'm going to need to get through the trauma of the grief and then I'll go through the trauma of moving. Moving out of the house would have been more painful

than staying in it. It would have been like running away from Michelle's ghost rather than giving her ghost time to leave at its own pace.

PLAYBOY: If you could imagine an avatar for grief, what would it be?

OSWALT: An avatar of despair would be like a flavour packet you get with a Cup O' Noodles. On the packet is generic lettering that reads, "This is life", but when you taste it, it's just a flavour of life. You can't live on it and it has a weird flavour. All it does is make you hungrier, and that drives you crazy because it tastes like life, but it isn't life. When I won my Emmy, it was great, but it was like, "This is the flavour of joy, but I'm not digesting anything"

PLAYBOY: Could anything or anybody help you punch through the despair?

OSWALT: You know what really helped me break through? Sheer f*cking absurdity, because life was absurd. I was obsessed with *The Eric Andre Show*, and when I would laugh until I started crying, it was like, "At least I'm laughing. Maybe there's a way out of this". What else? Tim and Eric. A lot of Mitchell and Webb — there's



a sketch of theirs called "Numberwang" that I would watch over and over. I wanted sheer absurdity and nonsensicalness. I'd watch Billy Eichner over and over. I watched all of Steve Martin's old TV specials, because that was just surrealism in prime time in the late 1970s, and it's hard to believe that was on TV. I remember very clearly when I was a kid, my friend had *Another Monty Python* Record on LP, and we started listening to it. I was like, "This is stupid. This isn't funny." I went home and listened to *A Wild and Crazy Guy*, and in the middle of it, I thought, Oh, I get Monty Python now. It's just sheer absurdity.

PLAYBOY: How has your life been changed by falling in love with Meredith Salenger, who is now your fiancée? Many movie fans have also fallen in love with her, going as far back as the 1985 movie *The Journey of Natty Gann*.

OSWALT: Here's the thing. I've been through such extremes of despair and now such extremes of joy that I think, Is that unhealthy? My fiancée and I started talking February 28, through Facebook. We have friends in common and we were messaging, and it just turned into every night for three months. February through May. We would talk about everything, writing these short novels to each other every night. It wasn't like I met this person and there was some thunderbolt. During that time, we never even spoke, never met face-to-face. We had conversations about books and philosophies and what love means and what loyalty and death are. We talked all about Michelle and what I was going through and the stuff that Meredith has gone through. We didn't meet face-to-face until May 20.

PLAYBOY: What was it like when you two finally met?

OSWALT: It was as if I had known this person since we were teenagers and we both had unrequited crushes since we were 14 and now it was finally crashing together. Even though I'm at this level of joy I didn't think I would ever feel again, I still wouldn't recommend those extremes to anybody. I'd like people to have this joy without that despair. And this is not a case of "Yeah, but see, it makes joy so much sweeter." No, this joy would have been just as sweet without the horror.

PLAYBOY: To repeat the old Hollywood cliché, if Ginger Rogers gave Fred Astaire sex appeal and Astaire gave Ginger Rogers class, what's the dynamic between you and Meredith?

OSWALT: If I really boil it down, she brings me — and I've rarely experienced this with someone excitement and calm, which sounds contradic-

tory. I'm excited, but because she gives me something that is so secure and calming, I don't have to question and worry about it. There are no mind games. I'm calm enough to let the excitement really grow, you know?

One of the things I missed the most about Michelle is like the old Elvis Costello lyric: "I miss talking in the dark." Meredith and I talk in the dark, at night. One of us has some half-formed thought, like "I've been thinking about..." and then we just go off and off and off. Of course, she's beautiful before she even opens her mouth. I mean, you just look at her across the room and you think, Oh my God, beautiful woman. But then you sit and talk with her, and you write back and forth, and you also see her not just in action. It means only so

I'd like people to have this joy without that despair. This joy would have been just as sweet without the horror.

much if someone is nice to me; it's how you see her treat other people. She can teach me things about being kind that I thought I maybe had nailed down. Michelle was the last person I met like that, but this is another level of it, an even more intense version of that. But if I hadn't met Michelle and been changed by her the way that I was, and if she hadn't helped me grow the way that I did, I would never have deserved Meredith. With Meredith, I have a mind I can play with again.

PLAYBOY: How did you react when some people went nuts on the internet, criticizing you for moving too fast into a new relationship?

OSWALT: Oh f*ck. A friend of mine who went through this exact same thing and got married nine months afterwards said, "You are living with and dealing with this grief every second of your life and in therapy all the time. So, you're going to get over it quicker, because you have to. For others to go, 'I don't think I'm comfortable with this', it's like, 'Too f*cking bad. Live with it every day like I did, and if you're still uncomfortable, then we can talk. But until then you've got to be quiet'."

PLAYBOY: How have your parents, your brother and your late wife's family taken the news of your engagement?

OSWALT: When I told Michelle's sisters they were like, "Oh my God, we were so worried. We thought you were going to be alone forever." If I had passed away, no f*cking way would I want someone as dynamic and unique as Michelle to be puning for me. My family was terrific. My dad served in Vietnam for three years, so he's very pragmatic, like, "Why would you make yourself miserable if you don't need to be?" He was really happy, and my mom was excited too. My mom had that classic 1950s upbringing, though, so she had one question: "Why has Meredith never been married?" I'm like, "Because she didn't want to be. You understand, if she went that long without

getting married, it's because she dodged some bullets, so that's actually a really good thing." My brother was really happy, like, "Oh my God. She's smart. She's sane. It's wonderful."

PLAYBOY: You and your brother travelled a lot because of your father's military career. Have the two of you always been close?

OSWALT: Growing up, my relationship with my brother was tense only in that I liked books and movies and if I had my way I could spend hours just reading. He would say, "Well, you never played catch with me", and I would say, "Yeah, but you never discussed Dostoyevsky's 'White Nights' with me. So there." But now he's

awesome. I love him.

PLAYBOY: Does being the son of a military man, a man who named that son Patton, mean there was pressure on you or your brother to serve in the military?

OSWALT: I think my dad named me Patton partially out of irony, because at that point he had been in the military for three years, he'd been wounded and seen three years of unending horror. He was always, "You and your brother will join the military over my dead body, and you will never go to war." I remember I was always very down on George W. Bush. I was like, "That f*cking draft dodger", and my dad would say, "Hold up. The fact that he dodged the Vietnam draft is a positive. He saw it was going to be terrible and he found a way out of it. I couldn't figure out a way out of it. He did."

PLAYBOY: How do you most vividly remember yourself as a kid?

OSWALT: I was a f*cking loudmouth. I got beaten up a few times, but if I'm going to look back on it honestly, maybe I needed to get my ass kicked





because I was running my mouth at someone I shouldn't have been running it at. There were times in middle school when I was really nervous and terrified that I would become that thing I hate the most, because I was the bully's little friend. If I could get in good with the bully and help him by using my comedic skills to feed him vicious lines to say to kids, then I wouldn't get my ass kicked. It's something that really has stayed with me, and I will overreact when I see it. But then, by the time I got to high school, it just made me f*cking ill, and I stopped. I'm embarrassed that it took me that long to realise it. As much as I hate people like Karl Rove, if you look at his background and the way he grew up, he was always getting picked on and bullied, so he was like, "I will get in with the bullies." Some of us work to move past that.

PLAYBOY: Have you gone to school reunions?

OSWALT: Yes, and it reminds me of that great moment at the end of *The King of Comedy* when the main character has clearly gone nuts, and the high school principal comes out and says something like "We were wrong about you, and we're sorry." Everyone has this thing in their mind that anyone who was ever shitty to them is going to have to eat their words. Whereas what you realise later in life is that those people who were shitty to you when you were younger? They don't remember you, or if they were to meet you again, they would go, "Oh, good for you." I've gone to my high school reunions and seen people I was shitty to, and I'll say, "Aw, man, hey, I'm sorry", and they're like, "What are you talking about?" You were never the target; it was whatever slut they were going through.

PLAYBOY: Were you one of the kings of comedy at your high school?

OSWALT: It was me and about five other friends who could recite Monty Python, Pryor and Cosby — and in this group, they were all funnier than me. I just decided to make it into a vocation. But it was a really good preview for my circle of friends now — all the comedians I hang out with are way funnier than I am. I don't believe in false humility. I think I'm an excellent comedian, but the reason I'm as good as I am is because I hang out with way funnier people. So, in my mind, I have their voices going, "Maybe don't go with the first joke you came up with. Go further. What's the next twist we can do here?" And there's nothing worse for a comedian than being the funniest one in the circle.

PLAYBOY: What feels more rewarding when you're doing stand-up: getting a big response from the crowd or getting a response from that one comedian friend you know is a tough critic?

OSWALT: What has become the biggest reward for me is finding a way to get a response from a crowd with something about which my friends have said, "I don't know if you can make that work." That's what comedians appreciate: "Wow. I didn't think that was going to work." It's thrilling when Sarah Silverman, Dave Chappelle and Louis CK are so funny, because for comedians it's like, "They got laughs with that? Wow!" Dave Attell starts with the filthiest premise or with something that you're like "The f*ck are you doing?" and then spins it into something that even people who are offended will go, "F*ck, that is funny."



Brian Regan will start off with the most picked-to-death, hacky subjects where you're like, "Come on, dude." And then he finds this new angle, and you think, Oh my f*cking... Everyone else thought of that same premise, but no one went where he did, and the crowd literally can't get their breath watching him. Two comedian friends went to see him, and they said, "We were punching each other, we were so happy." Brian Regan is like a reminder of when people say, "Oh, not another f*cking zombie movie", but the f*cking zombie movie turns out to be *Shaun of the Dead*. Or it's like Anthony Bourdain making haddock. "Just look at what I can do with nothing. Can you

do this?" It's very intimidating.

PLAYBOY: What would you say was your nadir as a stand-up?

OSWALT: It was after 9/11 and during the lead-up to the Iraq war. I'd been on *King of Queens* four years. The show was very popular, and I was selling out clubs, just coasting on that. I was in Pittsburgh doing a comedy club and the audience booed me off the stage for talking about the war and doing jokes about George Bush. People were dumping drinks on me and throwing shit. They had to lock me in the office while they cleared the crowd. People were down at the bar, screaming, "Send his ass down here! Motherf*cker!" I wasn't some liberal flamethrower, and what I said wasn't that controversial. The nadir was that I got lazy. I allowed *King of Queens* to bring my crowd with-

out asserting who I was. Success brings you the privileges, but you don't get to be yourself. Your nadir is when you're taking success for granted and becoming this automaton who doesn't give a shit about what you're doing.

PLAYBOY: Getting back to your childhood, what was your parents' attitude toward sexuality and porn?

OSWALT: I looked at any porn I could get my hands on, trust me. They found some Playboys under my bed, and that was my fault because I had hidden them so badly, and I should have been punished. I was more into finding porn in places I didn't even realise I was finding it, like illustrations in *Heavy Metal* by Richard Corben and movies like *Village of the Giants*. I had fantasies of giantesses. There was also weird sexual stuff in places that I don't think many people realised. That scene in *The Big Sleep* with Dorothy Malone in the bookstore with Humphrey Bogart was maybe one of the most erotic things ever shown on

TV. I mean, in *Written on the Wind* she's ridiculously and contemporarily sexy and beautiful. Look, Lauren Bacall is beautiful, though in *The Big Sleep* she's actually sexy, like you can see f*cking her and everything else is, "Eh, okay." But Dorothy Malone, Ella Rames, Bettie Page, I could see f*cking them — like erotic f*cking them, because they're alive on that screen. Same with Simone Simon in *Cat People*, except that she's less sexy and it's more like you just want to protect her. I'm being creepy, but I want to have her under a glass dome and just look at her.

PLAYBOY: Was being funny an entrée to girls when you were growing up?

OSWALT: An entrée? Trying to be funny was the



entrée the only one I had. I have to come to terms with the fact that I do not have those looks for women. I doubt I would be engaged to my fiancée if she had just glanced at me across a room. It was us talking. I mean, it can be very frustrating when you're like, "*Grrrr*, these f*cking good-looking assholes" They've probably racked up 10 times the number of women you're going to sleep with, and the woman you end up with has probably hooked up with one of them in the past. **PLAYBOY:** Who would be the right movie director to shoot the screen version of you losing your virginity?

OSWALT: Unfortunately, it would be either Lina Wertmüller or John Waters. Here's why: I was 18. It was Beach Week in Ocean City, Maryland, at the Islander Motel, with my high school girlfriend since junior year. Later, we went all through college and it was one of those tumultuous on-and-off things. Anyway, back to the Islander Motel. We had done everything *but*, and it was just, "We gotta do this." Both sunburned. F*cking. We had the TV on because the walls were thin. It was MTV and the songs were f*cking great like Cheap Trick's "Tonight It's You." Then, when I'm like, "My God, I'm going to come", George Michael's "I Want Your Sex" comes on. I'm like, "I don't want to lose my virginity to this song!" But I was so f*cking turned on, I was going to come anyway, even if they had started playing "Deutschland Über Alles." So it was a great Wertmüller or Waters moment. Of course, there's going to be a bit of comedy in the irony of it.

PLAYBOY: Anyone who has seen you in concert or read your Facebook page or Twitter feeds knows how passionate you are about politics. How has Trump's presidency made an impact on your grieving and on your state of mind?

OSWALT: One thing about grieving is I don't totally trust a lot of my emotions and perceptions about the world we're in right now. I see a lot of it through the funnel of loss and damage and covering up. I'm trying to understand people rather than just write them off.

PLAYBOY: Even those people in positions of authority and influence who can do and are doing great harm?

OSWALT: Take someone like Ann Coulter, who is so hateful. If you just take three steps back, you can see trauma, loss, frustration. It's not that she's mean, it's that she's hurt. If you look at how Trump and his siblings were raised, what we're seeing is the tail end of his having been hurt his whole life. His whole life since his childhood has been about vengeance and lashing out. He also

came along during a time when a lot of the neoliberal experiment had kind of turned on the people it pretended to be helping.

PLAYBOY: You're not saying Trump should have been elected president?

OSWALT: No. But what if you're an American and you're watching your job go away and you're watching this professional chattering class just talking *blah, blah, blah* about theories? Then you see this guy Trump, and he says, "F*ck them! You're great!" Even if you suspect he's lying, if it will upset someone powerful, even for a minute.

PLAYBOY: You mean that person might vote for Trump?

OSWALT: I understand doing shit out of vengeance. I understand kicking at the world out of a

If you look at how Trump was raised, what we're seeing is the tail end of his having been hurt his whole life.

feeling of powerlessness. If we don't start addressing that in this country, we're going to get someone way worse than Trump way quicker than we think. I had opportunities to do some pretty shitty stuff in my grief that would have been very easy to justify, like "Well, look what life did to me, so f*ck it. I'm the wronged hero here." I could have done shit out of fear and frustration.

PLAYBOY: Like what?

OSWALT: Shitty things I could have written. Mean things I could have said. Using my platform in that way. Some dark roads I could have gone down drinking-wise that I saw starting to happen before I said to myself, Okay, that was a mistake. Some relationships I could have had that would have been out of a sheer feeling of "I just want a warm body here. I don't give a shit." And that would have been very shitty of me to do to another person.

PLAYBOY: So, you're calling for a more honest and nuanced examination of why so many Americans voted the way they did.

OSWALT: The thing about Trump is that he's someone who will leave decades of destruction behind him. Trump is a trauma victim. When he's

lashing out, he's going through some serious psychological trauma, and no one has addressed it. I retweeted something someone wrote: "I don't want evil people to die. I want evil people to get good." A lot of people who are hurt are like, "I'm just going to spread hurt. I've earned it. I get to do that." What is the motivation of every villain? Someone hurt them. It's like the line Michael Penn always said to me that was then used in *Magnolia*: "We might be through with the past, but the past ain't through with us." For all the things I can point out about people like Trump, Ann Coulter and these alt-right MRA douchebags, I see that same jealousy, resentment and trauma in myself. I'm trying to deal with that. I no longer want to control other people; I want to control myself. If I can control myself, then I can actually do better in the world.

PLAYBOY: Have you stopped trying to talk to any conservative or alt-right people?

OSWALT: I've dealt with those people before, all my life. These frustrated failed comedians. There's no changing them. All they want to hear is "I'm funny too, right?" And you're like, "Well, no, I can't say that, because you're not." I know plenty of right-wing people who are genuinely funny, but they're professional comedians. You know how I can instantly tell if someone's a failed comedian? They'll say, "I'm a provocateur." Oh, I've got it. You couldn't make it as a comedian.

PLAYBOY: Has your anxiety level spiked since Trump and company have been at the helm?

OSWALT: The thing I was always terrified about with George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden, the one thing they really had in common was they both sincerely believed their god had selected them. For a while, the fate of the world was being decided by resentful sons of wealth who hated their dads and had gone to extremes because of personal trauma in their lives. They believed God was saying, "You have a score to settle. I've got your back, buddy." As scary as the Trump years are, that Bush-Bin Laden shit was cranked up to Tolkien-level evil and chaos. Bush was a mediocrity being controlled by an evil genius. Trump is a mediocrity surrounded by other mediocrities. There's no evil genius in the mix. We don't have a Palpatine or a Tarkin in there. We just have cave trolls.

PLAYBOY: What about the Putin connection?

OSWALT: This wasn't a 40-year plan by Putin. Putin quickly saw an opportunity and ran with it, but there was no plan. Trump doesn't have any plans. Whatever was the last thing someone said to him, he'll parrot. He was talking about the wall



between California and Mexico being transparent. That's because he was in a meeting and someone said, "Financially, we have to have transparency." He isn't even a Chauncey Gardiner [protagonist of Jerzy Kosinski's novella *Being There*] because Chauncey Gardiner at least had an ethos: You plant trees, then they die, and then you plant them again. Trump is like Chauncey Gardiner but with no training. He doesn't even know how to plant shit. In Trump's mind finally America has a good president, a truly historical president who is changing things.

When people say, "Trump is so infantile. Look at the goddamn food he eats", I think, No, he's eating the way I eat when I'm depressed. He wants comfort. He wants a rush of carbs, salt, sugar and something fried that will take him back to his childhood, because he's miserable. If you took him to a truly fine, expensive restaurant, he would just f*cking hate it. If you took him to a really good barbecue joint, it would kill him watching these guys being happy while they make their beef basket, sweating and toiling but saying, "This is what I want to do." But to be brought KFC on his jet and to show everyone, that's his little moment of happiness, because he can shove it in people's faces. Look at all the gold and jets; for him it's "I'm f*cking miserable." That's why he talks about losers, "sad" and winning. There have to be moments when he looks over at someone making a sandwich and sees a peace in their eyes that he has never felt. It must enrage him.

PLAYBOY: Where is the resistance from Democrats, let alone the self-examination that should have happened after losing the election?

OSWALT: Oh, I don't see any looking into a deep, dark, truthful mirror on the part of the Democrats right now. That might be because of some entrenched older generation people who need to make way. There's a great podcast, *Chapo Trap House* — they call themselves the Dirtbag Left — that talks about this. Right now, there are too many other Democrats who are entrenched and comfortable. I see them as World War I generals saying, "Send another wave of machine guns." Or they're the advisors left over from the Korean War. They don't understand that there's a new enemy. They don't get it. Look, in a sick way, there will be some very concerned and committed leftists who will be sad to see Trump go because then their daily outrage is taken away. And you know what? I might even end up being guilty of that. We'll see. I hope not, because a lot of people are really hurting and afraid right now because of

him specifically because of him — so it would be good if he were gone. But there's money to be made in the disaster that is Trump, even for people on the left.

PLAYBOY: Where do you spend your political money?

OSWALT: My plan once Trump got in was to put money not into so-called "political organizations" but to signal-boost smaller charities that we're going to need — social organizations like NARAL and the American Indian College Fund. I got on the President's Circle of Planned Parenthood. And Alice's Kids, which anonymously pays off school-lunch debt at high-risk schools. Go to a little independent bookstore, go see a little independent film, do things that our administration

It's called Annihilation, and it's about just that. It gets really dark, and I hope I end it on a hopeful note.

doesn't value, the kind of entrepreneurship in the arts that, to them, is like "F*ck all that shit. Why run a little bike shop and make just enough to pay your rent, you f*cking losers? You should turn it into a giant chain and blight the landscape."

PLAYBOY: What happens when the Rock and Kid Rock and — why not? — Scott Baio and Tila Tequila run and maybe win?

OSWALT: We're f*cked. I love the Rock. It's a brutally hard job to be an action hero. Look at all the guys who tried to do it and it was unwatchable. That doesn't mean you're going to be a good president. Arnold Schwarzenegger was an amazing actor and businessman and a terrible governor. He f*cked our state up. Now he's a very effective critic. If you notice, all his critiques come from, "Hey, look, I know I tried doing this, and I f*cked it up." One of the most moral men alive, Jimmy Carter, was a terrible president, but he's an amazing ex-president who takes people to task. If he had gotten his way as president, our country would be so f*cking better right now. He was saying, "We've got to get off oil for the environment and because it would cut the knees out from under the Middle East, and then they won't be able to

fund terrorism." He saw all this, and people said, "Get out of here, you dumb hippie." In a sick way, you could say George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan were amazing politicians, because as horrible as they were, they pretty much passed all the evil shit they wanted.

PLAYBOY: Before we wrap, let's talk about your upcoming special.

OSWALT: It's called *Annihilation*, and it's about just that. In it, I don't back away from the fact that here I am doing some comedy, and now I gotta do a hard segue into the year I just went through. It gets really dark, and I hope I end it on a hopeful note. I tell this insane, unnecessarily dirty, going-out-of-my-way-to-be-really-gross joke that Michelle and I would always riff on — it's about pitching movies. Michelle thought it was hilarious. She liked it when things were, to quote Liz Phair, "obnoxious, funny, true and mean", and so that's where I went with it.

People were saying, "You should do a one-man show." I'm like, "No, I'm a stand-up comedian. I don't want to exploit Michelle and Alice for some bigger piece." And also, I wrote very specifically about what I went through grief-wise, and it seems to have helped a lot of people. In talking specifically, I accidentally tripped into something universal. People who are going through this have been writing me, and they've helped me. There's this horrific club we're in, and we're all about "I want to make sure that person's okay." That's your first instinct, just to go, "Hey, let me reach out."

PLAYBOY: Your new movie, *Nostalgia*, is about characters dealing with loss and grief. Did you have any ambivalence about doing it?

OSWALT: I trusted the director, Mark Pellington. I am, literally, in only one scene, but in that scene I'm grieving over a child. I got a little angry with Mark and kind of had a breakdown on the set, like, "What the f*ck? For real, dude, why the f*ck are you making me do this right now? I'm not ready for this. I understand you have the best intentions in your heart?" — because he went through the same thing I did. [Pellington's wife died in 2004, leaving him with a two-year-old daughter.] "But goddamn, dude, would you have wanted to do this?" I think he meant well, like he thought it would be a catharsis, but it's kind of not. **PLAYBOY:** So, despite everything, is it getting better for you at all?

OSWALT: It's no slam on Meredith, but I've been conditioned to believe this level of joy always gets yanked away from you. So I'm cautiously hopeful. Cautiously happy. Does that make sense? ■



Playboy Advisor

Columnist Bridget Phetasy on when it's okay to have sex with a best friend's ex. Plus, advice for a woman whose boyfriend isn't cutting it between the sheets



Q: *How soon is too soon to start dating a friend's ex? Here's the story: A year ago, my buddy was sleeping with a girl he really liked. They never made it official, though, because she didn't like him in that way. (She pretty much broke his heart.) Now, a year later, the woman is sliding into my DMs on Instagram, and she lives only two blocks away. I liked her then and I like her now, so I want to pursue something. By the way, my buddy goes on a new Tinder date every other week, so I think he's over her. — JG*



A: Here's what I know about men: It's never too soon and it's never too late to date your buddy's ex, because either way he's going to be ticked off. Blame evolution and men's deeply ingrained biological drive to dominate when competing for a mate. It boils down to "You're not going to piss on my tree." That's the bad news. The good news is that culturally, men are indoctrinated with the "bro code" from the time they're children. Growing up, they're taught "bros before hos" every step of the way. So, men are much better than women at dinking it out, licking their wounds and moving on. But your buddy's frequent Tinder dating is no guarantee he's over her. My guess is he's still trying to fill the hole she left when she crushed his heart. So, ask yourself how good a buddy he is. If you do pursue her, be prepared for a backlash, and recognize that you might be sacrificing a friendship for an Instagram crush. Is she worth it?

Q: *How tacky are bite marks? I'm currently sporting a few that felt hot at the time, but now I'm a little embarrassed about them. Asking for a friend who won't ask for me.* LW

A: Getting bite marks and hickey marks is like entering a hot-pepper-eating contest: It's thrilling in the moment, but you'll regret it later. They're tacky as f*ck and scream "I'm a teenager discovering my sexuality!" or "I'm desperately trying to prove how much sex I'm having!" or "I wear Ed Hardy T-shirts!" (And I say this with all due respect to anyone who identifies with those sentiments.) Even so, it happens. Fingerprint bruises on the ass, claw marks down the back, rug burn—all this evidence that you just had kinky sex isn't a great look at your family braai. If you're into being branded, keep it in places you can hide. Also, if you're not in an exclusive relationship, potential partners probably won't be stoked to see remnants of your other, crazier sexual escapades on your body.

Q: *I've gone on several dates with someone and want to ask her to be exclusive, but I worry I'm not in the right financial position to take the relationship to that level. To start, I have a roommate. I know some women look down on that, so I haven't even brought her home. Am I being overly sensitive about my circumstances?* DBs

A: Yes and no. I have a lot of compassion for men, because despite third and fourth-wave feminism, you're still expected to be big-shot providers. Women still want a guy—a baller—who can pay the bill even if they want to be able to pay it themselves too. So, I understand

why your financial circumstances might make you feel insecure, especially given our capitalist society's tendency to equate one's value with one's bank account. You have to ask yourself what kind of woman you want. For women who require a certain kind of lifestyle, the fact that you don't own a home would be a deal breaker. That's fine. Other women value substance over materialism. If the person you're dating judges you for having a roommate (assuming this roommate isn't your mom and you're living in her basement), she might not be the right one for you. Figure that out before you even contemplate something as serious as an exclusive relationship.

Q: *Is it possible to be in love with two people at the same time? I've been casually dating someone for three months now, and on a few occasions "I love you" almost slipped out of my mouth when we were saying good-bye. So I know I love her. But I've also realized that I'm in love with a friend of about a year. I can't stop thinking about either of them. What's the difference between love and infatuation? I've never felt so conflicted.* KH

A: These are two separate questions, so let's start with the first. Yes, it is absolutely possible to be in love with two people at the same time; the practice of polyamory is based on this idea. I suggest you look into poly. It will turn you on to alternatives to monogamy and you'll also learn about a radical approach to communication, honesty and transparency that can be applied to any relationship. And of course you feel conflicted. You're trying to pin down a feeling—love—that's as deep, vast and changing as the ocean. Love is a shapeshifter. It can be the warmth you feel for a child or the familial devotion you have for a sibling. It can be delirious and messy, like infatuation, or hot, passionate and short-term. That same infatuation may then turn into friendship, which then evolves into deeper affection. Try to pin down love and you lose. Let it be. Your challenge is to remain honest with both women and, more important, yourself while love does its thing. You have a lot of questions to answer, but first is whether either woman feels the same way about you. Start there.

Q: *I consider myself a romantic guy, but it seems the more romantic the gesture (e.g., randomly sending flowers and "good morning" texts), the more a girl backs off. Is negging the new chivalry?* CO

A: No. Chivalry is the new chivalry because it died sometime around 2005 when Neil Strauss published *The Game*. Pen-

etrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists and courting a woman morphed into just picking her up. Negging is lame. Most smart, modern women are savvy enough to see through that shit. Over the years, we've developed strong immunities to stupid tricks. Don't resort to playground tactics. We're adults here. Unfortunately, many women I know have become so distrustful of male advances that they sometimes view even straightforward romance with skepticism. You have to be willing to put in the time it takes to earn a girl's trust. There's also such a thing as doing too much, too soon, which signals that you may be co-dependent, controlling or needy. She might also just be one of those women who are into assholes, which is her problem, not yours. Consider some rejections a blessing. Go easy. Unless you're bombarding her with flowers and texts like a psycho, keep being your charming self. Eventually you'll attract a woman who appreciates your old-school values. It might even be me.

Q: *Woman to woman, what's the best way to tell a boyfriend he's not a great lover? We have sex, and I'm attracted to him, but I feel my body is simply a vehicle for his orgasms. The way he positions my legs, the focus he gives me during sex and his interest in helping me come after he comes all need improvement. I love him, but his lackluster sex skills are his worst quality.* KA

A: Telling a man he sucks in the sack requires the finesse and skill of a bomb defuser. A man's identity is intertwined with his sexual prowess, and broaching the subject will expose you to booby traps, remote detonations and ambushes from his ego. Proceed with caution. Men aren't taught how to f*ck. We have to teach them—gently. Don't bring up the subject in the heat of the moment (do it over brunch or dinner instead) and don't say anything that will put him on the defensive. If you make him feel like a failure, you'll set the stage for all sorts of interpersonal problems, such as performance anxiety. Ask if he's willing to explore some new techniques in the bedroom with you. Make it about the two of you getting to know each other better. Express that you want to focus more on your orgasm, your pleasure. Most men are responsive to the idea of improving their skills. Worst-case scenario, you've fallen in love with a selfish asshole. You'll never be satisfied, because you'll either grow resentful or end up looking outside the relationship to meet your needs. If that's the truth, f*ck him—then get out.



JASON FLEETWOOD **THE ROLLING STONES**

Your name sounds very exotic, please tell us your ethnicity and background

My name is apparently Persian but my ethnicity is a mix between Macedonian, Egyptian, Irish on my dad's side and on my mother's side she was full Māori which is an islander

How old are you?

I'm 22

How do you like Australia? Would you consider it your home?

Look it is definitely home, would like to be my home forever probably not. The only thing that keeps me there is my family and close friends. My heart is in the states that's for sure

Any tattoos?

No tattoos as much as I think some people can get beautiful artwork on their skin and it suits them it will never be for me. I've always been too scared of needles

What type of music do you listen to?

I listen to a bit of everything but when I go out and I'm having a couple drinks I strictly only like to listen to RnB, hip-hop or trap music

Your all-time favourite artist? (you can only pick one.)

That is such a hard one because I'm an artist myself I have so many. But if I'd have to say one, Lil' Kim is my favourite. I love her energy in music and I don't believe there would be half the female rappers there are today if it wasn't for her. You have to give credit where credit is due

What's your favourite current song right now?

Kevin Gates - No Love

Favourite actor/actress?

Angelina Jolie

Favourite movie?

50 cents - Get Rich or Die Tryin

What is your dream car?

Mercedes G wagon

You are representing Ultra Tune, what is that like?

It is honestly amazing. Get to shoot awesome commercials with celebrities, also get to travel with my job and get amazing magazine opportunities. Couldn't ask for a better gig to be honest

How has Ultra Tune shaped your career as a model?

I feel like it made me more disciplined in shaping who I am as a person which reflected in my modeling career. The company has taught me so much and opened so many doors and opportunities I could only dream of

Would you consider yourself a celebrity?

Not just yet but there is definitely potential there. Seeing myself to be something GREAT. I always have hometown friends that refer to me as "famous now". I try to stay as humble as possible at all times

What are some of your hobbies?

What do you enjoy doing when not in the spotlight? I enjoy writing music and browsing through the latest fashion. I spend a lot of time perfecting my make-up and I also love shopping

What is your worst habit?

Checking my phone constantly when I'm out with good company

What does gracing the cover mean to you?

It means everything. It's such a childhood dream to be on the front cover of a magazine. Just feel so blessed

What is your favourite body part on a man? on a woman?

On a man big shoulders are a must. On a woman I like a big booty

What would you consider to be your best asset? Everybody tells me it's my smile

Your biggest turn ons?

A good perfume. Well-dressed. Some positive energies and good vibes

Your biggest turn offs?

A liar. Someone who can't hold a conversation or a worry wart

Tell us something about you that nobody else knows, one secret. Used to love being alone now I hate it

Describe yourself with only three words.

Bossy, ambitious and wild

Would you consider yourself a sexual person? How important is sex in a relationship?

I'm never sexual unless I'm in a relationship but when I have a partner I would consider myself extremely sexual. Yes

What advice would you give aspiring models just entering the industry?

I would tell models to never give up. It's hard in this industry and people are so mean and will try to bring you down at the time. I don't let them, stay positive stay blessed and stay beautiful

This cannot be easy to talk about, but earlier this year, you lost your boyfriend Rossario. Our deepest condolences. What did his life and death mean to you?

Wow good question. It definitely isn't easy to speak about but thank you for asking as he was one of the biggest parts of my life even though I only knew him for a short time of 2 years. I've never known such an amazing human inside and out, he changed me and helped me so much throughout our relationship. I still thank him in my prayers. His death was one of the hardest things I've ever had to face but the lessons I learned from his passing will be with me for a lifetime. It's changed me so much, I've done a complete 360. Found out who my real friends are and I promised him I'd work hard on achieving all I have set out to do in this life. Just want to make him proud. He's always with me now watching over me and I know that I'll never let anyone forget him

Finally, on a more positive note, what goals do you have in life? What are your plans, your aspirations? Where do you see yourself in the near future?

We all said before I'm a very ambitious person, so I'd like to grow my social media, grow my platform to one day start my own business in something to do with the fashion or make up. Love acting a so maybe even putting more energy into that for the rest of this year and next year. Also hopefully gaining a big enough platform to one day be able to help people when I have a big enough reach. I have been through so much through my life and I would like to educate others out there with my knowledge. That would be a dream

Want to see more of Parnia? Then follow her on Instagram

@parniaporsche or on Snapchat at mifabulouslife















CARS, CANS AND MOTOGP

Lewis Hamilton has the thirst to win his fourth Formula One world title. The Mercedes-AMG Petronas Motorsport Team star has launched his own drink, named after his racing number, 44, that he hopes will power him on to glory this season. We caught up with Lewis to talk about his new signature Monster Energy drink, F1, MotoGP and his passion for extreme sports.





How was it designing the flavour of the drink? Were you part of the tasting process?

Designing the flavour was a lot of fun, and yes I was involved at every stage of the way I talked through the types of drinks and flavours I was into with the team at Monster Energy, and they came back to me with lots of options. I was genuinely surprised at how well they interpreted what we had talked through. Although I tested out quite a few flavours, it was actually the very first blend that I tasted that we went with. I can't remember why exactly but I was actually sitting on the bullet train from Tokyo to Suzuka at the time when I had the very first sip.

I loved it – that was it! Done!

Will you drink 44 during race weekends or do you have your own bespoke formula to help with hydration and performance?

I'll definitely drink it out of the car during race weekends, and it'll be exactly the same as everyone can buy off the shelves – which I think is actually pretty cool! It's a bit of a dream come true to have my own drink, which I've helped design and create. It's exciting to know you've made something and put it out there, and hope people enjoy

it as much as I do.

If so, what's in it and how does it work?

In the car it's either just water or my trainer mixes up a specific isotonic drink to help me with a fluid loss of up to two kilos during a hot Grand Prix, and cope physically during the race. Modern Formula One is so physical, so hydration is important over the whole weekend. The in-car drink does the job – but my new Monster Energy drink gets me up for the race and tastes a lot better!

Diet is also important. I see you have cut out red meat, is there anything else you eat or take to stay in shape?

I have – weight, strength and endurance are the three most important things to balance now as a driver – and honestly it's tough! The day after a Grand Prix weekend is when you are the most sore, and that's when diet really counts. You want to eat to recover, but also you have to stay a set weight, so you can't pack in a load of protein or carbohydrates like pancakes or something that I'd really love to eat. I go for a balanced diet of fresh vegetables and lean meat like chicken most of the time.

The Monster tie up suits your passion for extreme sports; will it open doors for you to try other things?

Definitely – it's one of the many reasons I wanted to work more with the team at Monster Energy. We've been talking through some potential projects already – but I can't say much more at the moment!

When you are pushing yourself to the limit, through F1 and your hobbies, do you have to find the edge of what you can do?

Success is what drives me. Ever since I started racing when I was a little kid, I've wanted to push myself, and be the best at what I was doing. I guess that's filtered through to my whole life. You have to really immerse yourself in what you are doing to find that edge – if you want to call it that. Otherwise what's the point – right?

Have you ever been warned about doing dangerous sports? Are you allowed to do them?

Haha – all the time. My family all independently give me stick all the time, I don't think that's too unusual though? Of course in the official sense I have a responsibility to my team and sponsors who work so hard, so, I wouldn't







do anything to jeopardize that. F1 means too much me personally too. There's a big difference between having fun and taking unnecessary risks.

Valentino Rossi's also a Monster Energy athlete. Would you like to follow him into MotoGP one day? Or at least a test?

I love bikes. I don't really drive too much off-track, I tend to ride my MV Agusta bikes around. The sense of freedom you get is amazing when it's just you and the bike. But racing one would be a whole different proposition. I'm a big fan of MotoGP; it's just a very cool series. I would really love to get my hands on a MotoGP bike one day!

You've also expressed a desire to race in NASCAR. Would you be willing to speak to Mercedes to allow you take part in a race like Fernando Alonso did at the Indy 500?

Right now I'm solely focused on Formula One and achieving more wins and Championships so I need to be on my very best form without distraction. Formula One is the pinnacle of motorsport and although I admire all those racing in Indy 500, it's not in my game plan to drop F1 for anything else. NASCAR is a really

cool series and maybe sometime in the future I'd love to have a closer look at it.

Do you have a motivational song you listen to before a race?

If so, what? I listen to different music all the time so there's not one particular song. Sometimes I create a Grand Prix playlist that you can listen along to on my Spotify profile. Just search Lewis Hamilton and you'll find it.

If you could give a sentence or words of wisdom to my five-year-old in achieving his dreams, what would you say?

Work hard at school. Always listen to your parents because sometimes when you think they're not right, they're smarter than you think. Brush aside people who stand in your way. Set the highest goals, work hard, keep the faith and never ever give up.

Have you ever seen your life flash before your eyes? If so, when?

Nope.

What are your simple pleasures in life?

Family, music and friends.

If you could only ever drive one racetrack again what would it be?

Probably Macau, near Hong Kong. It's a crazy street circuit that we raced in Formula 3. Half of it is flat-out dual carriage way along the sea front. The other half is super tight and twisty into the old town. You have to run super low downforce for the straight which makes it super exciting for the twisty stuff. For me it's probably the best circuit in the world.

Some people say that you are the luckiest person in the world, what would you say to that?

I do feel super blessed for where I am in life. We came up from nothing, my Dad had four jobs to help me go karting, so let's be clear my success is based on hard work, perseverance, drive, determination and dreaming big. This is what got me the opportunity to race in Formula One.

When was your last time you cried and laughed so hard your belly hurt?

Every time I talk to Kevin Hart!





BUSY BEING BØRNS

Saturday Night Live and Rolling Stone. In the power of "getting weird" from pop music's most colourful new chameleon

PHOTOGRAPH BY DOUG INGLIS STYLING BY KATTYPALDOS

Words by AMY MARIE SLOCUM

Listening to the latest BØRNS single, "Faded Heart" and you should listen to it if you haven't already; it's a jam you might briefly mistake the 25-year-old for yet another 1970s-swig-devotee. Listen more closely, though, and the song turns out to be more complex than the same old moves that pop music has built its empire on. Ask about the specific influences behind his second studio album, out in early 2018, and the Michigan native lists great American musicians and composers from the Beach Boys to Roy Orbison to Les Baxter. Indeed, everything about BØRNS seems to derive from a deeper source, or perhaps several sources pooling together in vivid indescence.

His wardrobe is no less colourful or varied. He's often found in flowy shirts and tight pants à la Keith Richards on the

Sticky-Fingers tour, and his long wavy hair appears to give him-Samson-like powers onstage. Now that he's popping up at fashion week front rows, rubbing elbows with the top brass at Gucci and collaborating with the white-hot-designer Jahnkoy, BØRNS has emerged as the embodiment of a modern men's style that's retro and forward-looking all at once. You would do well to study the next few pages and see how he does it.

You moved to Los Angeles fairly abruptly a few years ago. How has the city influenced your style?

It wasn't really a move, it was sort of an accidental four-year vacation. To be honest, it doesn't feel like I've been in LA for four years because I've been touring so much. Since working on this new record I've re-acquainted myself with the sounds, the heat and the space of life here, which is really nice.





A lot of musicians find it hard to go from the road to back home and the studio. How do you deal with that creative dichotomy?

I think there are two people living inside me: One is the vagabond who enjoys performing and wearing bright, silky things, and then there's another part of me that enjoys getting into the craft of music and just wondering about a lot of different things

How did that influence the upcoming album?

Two things I wrote down when I was thinking about this record were "live strings" and "theremin" I wanted to have those on the album, so that was a jumping-off point. It's a mixture of real and synthesised instruments, and I think that's kind of where we are with music these days

Who are some of your style icons in music?

It's pretty broad. Anything from Purple Rain era Prince to a younger Little Richard, when he would go on all the talk shows in his pajama-style suits. Pretty much anyone who likes to constantly re-invent themselves is interesting. I have a pretty short attention span, so I always like trying different things.

You're known to have an affinity for Gucci, and the creative director there, Alessandro Michele, has spoken highly of you. What attracts you to that brand?

Alessandro's never-ending playfulness. There are so many things that go into those clothes, and his creative mind — where it goes and how he takes ancient influences and combines them with modern ones — is inspiring.

How would you describe your own style?

I guess it depends on my mood. I'm always blending in with my surroundings. Lately I've been wearing a lot of natural textures, and I've been into changing up my silhouette. I like high-waisted pants, blousy shirts, crop

tops — stuff that moves with the wind. I'm always experimenting and getting weird with what I wear because it's fun and it makes the performance different.

What's your hair regimen?

Just let nature do her thing. I don't really do much to alter it. It's good to let the natural oils work their way

How has your look changed as you've been exposed to the fashion world?

I think it's interesting that the fashion world is derived not just from fashion but also from the history of art and architecture. Fashion is just one element of that. Since I've been travelling a lot and working with my stylist, Kat Typaldos, I feel I've been getting a lot of different influences.

What trends are you into these days?

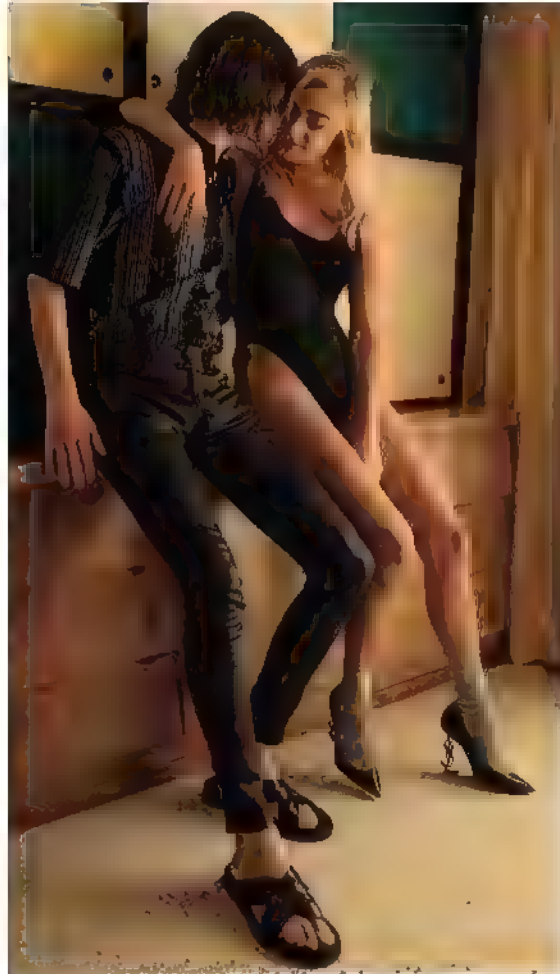
I like athletic influences in clothes. I did a collaboration with Jahnkoy, an incredible designer from Siberia. She does these kind of deconstructed tribal tracksuits, and her line is just unreal. I saw a show during New York Fashion Week back in January that was really inspiring, so we collaborated.

What was it like being a CFDA ambassador for New York Fashion Week: Men's?

You wear designer clothes, walk around, watch shows and drink expensive water.

You've said you were inspired by vintage PLAYBOYS when you were writing your first album, Dopamine. Can you elaborate on that?

Sure — how much do you want to know? [laughs] I mostly loved the advertisements. The language in them was clever and sexy and enticing. Actually, one of the songs on Dopamine, "Overnight Sensation", came from an ad for a speaker system that just said "Overnight Sensation". The picture tells a thousand words.





On her pool by
David Hart
On him pool by
Issey Miyake
rings art st s own



shirt by Rochambeau
jeans by Vetements
belt by Robert Geller

Shirt by David Hart
jeans by Vetements

LAUREN



FLEISHMAN



About me

I'm a writer and artist from Los Angeles, USA who is fascinated with human sexuality, gender, performance, art, the psychology of humans and breaking taboos. I am called a Muse because I inspire positive change in others.

My goals and career ambitions

Create and sell a scripted tv show for HBO, own and help curate an art gallery for street artists, finally move/travel to every country, write many books, become a motivational speaker on a global level. Work with all types of artists, become my best and inspire others to do the same.

My hobbies and interests

Reading, drinking tea, people watching, good sex, writing, thinking about alternate universes and time/space continuums, mind expansion and creating art with my friends.

Who inspires me

Cleopatra, Pablo Picasso, Allen Ginsberg, Camille Paglia, The fictional character Carrie Bradshaw, Marianne Williamson, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Russell Brand, Osho, Cindy Sherman and Zita Voss - trailblazers who aren't afraid to be a little subversive.

My favourite quote

"Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it." Confucius

Turn on

Confidence, knowledge and good style. I love smart guys who also put effort into cultivating a cool aesthetic.

Turn off

Laziness, unconsciousness, lack of empathy for others.

The perfect date

Rollerblading, ice skating, active stuff or anything artistic, something different than a dinner.

My girl crush

I have so many. My #1 is Madonna, the ultimate modern Queen. I love how she emerged as a completely groundbreaking artist and was able to constantly and (seemingly) authentically reinvent herself for decades and still is. She is a great role model for women as she teaches self-love, freedom of self-expression and acceptance for all. I also crush on Nancy Friday, Mae West, The Kaplan Twins and Paris Hilton.

My favourite food

I love anything that makes my body feel good: protein, green smoothies, natural foods, no sugar. But we also love dark chocolate.

My biggest fear

Fear is a lower vibration and an emotion I identify with rarely, but I have to go there. It would be maiming my dog, Rishi, hurt.

One destination I'd love to visit

The Great Pyramids in Egypt or Venice and

I'm not embarrassed to say

I meditate and pray to the universe daily. I also did an art project for Girl Gaze Project with @Syduals and the subject was on sexuality and taboos, so I used my own period blood as a medium. It was super fun and empowering. Photos came out great.

For more of Lauren's adventures you can follow her on Instagram @lafleish

Bra. 34D

Waist. 69cm

Hips 86cm

Height 170cm

Weight 57kg

Eye colour Brown













20Q

HALSEY

With Hopeless Fountain Kingdom, the queen of New Americana is more outspoken than ever. Here, she talks about donating \$100,000 to Planned Parenthood and the virtues of the dad bod

Photography by **REBECCA HAITHCOAT**





Q1: *Hopeless Fountain Kingdom* hit number one on the *Billboard* 200. You're the first woman to top that chart in 2017. How does it feel?

HALSEY: A lot of this accolade shit is super arbitrary: "Halsey is the first girl with blue hair from New Jersey to...." It's exciting but also enraging, because I know a lot of women who put out better albums than me who deserve massive accolades, and I'm the one who had to break the seal.

Q2: *Badlands*, your 2015 debut studio album, made you a pop star. In less than a year you went from playing 400-capacity clubs to selling out Madison Square Garden. Then, last year, the Chainsmokers' "Closer" blasted you to a whole new level. Has your ascent been as dizzying as it looks from here?

HALSEY: I got successful so quickly. I blinked, and a couple months later I was performing on national television. There was zero time to get adjusted. I was considered relevant and important enough to accept awards and perform, but some people were like, "Who the f*ck is that?" It's weird: The further I slip into the mainstream, I also maintain this kind of cult personality. And it's weird to me that I've tried so hard to be transparent, and then after "Closer" it dawned on me that many people know only that about me.

Q3: Do you ever feel you're underestimated?

HALSEY: I feel like I have been, yeah. After "Closer" — which is an absolutely great pop record, and I mean no disrespect to the guys — it was really hard for me and my fans. People were

like, "Oh, the 'backseat of your Rover' girl". My fans were like, "No, the girl I've loved for three years and sings about mental health and self love". Also, I write every song. I have co-writing credits, but most of the time it's a co-write from a melodic perspective. Make no mistake: The poetry is mine. I executive-produced this album and direct my videos, so to go from that to "Rover girl", no.

Q4: How is the new album different from *Badlands*?

HALSEY: I needed this album. I described *Badlands* as an angry female album. But I'm not angry anymore. I just feel catharsis. Calm. *Hopeless Fountain Kingdom* was about me trying to figure out who I am again. I'm smiling and happy. I stopped biting my nails. I have these long, beautiful nails I grew out because I'm not anxious anymore. Now I feel just... good. Until the next thing comes along that f*cks me up so I can write the third album.

Q5: You've become known as a pop star with an unusually close connection to your fans. Does that generosity make it hard for you to maintain romantic relationships?

HALSEY: I learned a while ago to keep that part separate. I've dated people no one knows about. I've managed to keep them to myself, going through a break up and not having it be on the f*cking internet. I'm always in a position of







dominance in my relationships, and a lot of people have had a hard time dealing with that. I think because I'm so dominant in my main life, in my intimate life I want to be in a position of submission. I want to be taken care of since I'm taking care of everybody else all the time. But I'm a f*cking 22-year-old female CEO of a company; I can't do all that all day and then come home to some person and be like, "Okay, now treat me like I'm a delicate little flower".

Q6: How do newer fans respond to you?

HALSEY: I love watching people change their mentality. I love watching frat bros tweet me things like "You're the hottest woman. You're my celebrity crush". And I'm judging them back, like "You are not a dude I'd think would find me hot. By any means". Whatever it is about me my music, the way I speak or whatever led you to be accepting and interested in me that's really cool.

Q7: You seem to have a pretty laissez-faire attitude about your appearance. Does that extend to your body image?

HALSEY: I always had an 18-year-old's tight body. I could just eat whatever the f*ck I wanted to and have abs, and my butt was always firm and round. Then recently I was changing and looked in the mirror and was like, "Oh my God it's been three months since I've been on tour! My body is changing. I need to put in work now". I went down this psychological rabbit hole, and now I'm telling myself that I need to change how my body is changing naturally.

Q8: Would you ever get cosmetic surgery?

HALSEY: I try never to do anything permanent. And it's not because I have qualms about plastic surgery; it's because I have qualms about my own indecisiveness. I don't want to make surgical decisions and in 10 years be like, "Ah, small lips are very in fashion now". Can you believe that around 10 years ago all the women's beauty magazines were writing articles about how to make your butt look smaller? Now it's "How to Make Your Butt Look As Big As You F*cking Can".

Q9: Do you think beauty ideals are becoming more inclusive?

HALSEY: I think we've finally reached the point where we're so oversaturated with sexuality and so much is considered "ideal" that we're in a position where we can change everything. I watch my own perspective changing. I was



I STILL HAVE WHITE BOYS ASKING ME WHY MY NIPPLES ARE BROWN.

talking to a guy, flirting with him by a pool, and he took off his shirt. He wasn't a muscular dude, but he wasn't skinny; he was kind of chubby. I just remember being like, "He looks so happy and confident, and I love the way he looks". This isn't a self-applauding thing. Hopefully we are becoming a society that appreciates people as a whole package instead of little parts on a checklist.

Q10: You're only 22, but you've already used your platform to raise awareness about social issues. You went to the Women's March in Washington DC and donated \$100,000 to Planned Parenthood earlier this year. How was that received?

HALSEY: The negativity around Planned Parenthood was crazy: "That's not your money. Someone's using you as a front to donate it." "Whenever celebrities say they're donating money, they never really are; it's a company." No. I charged it to my personal Amex card. And the second biggest response was "Why Planned Parenthood? Why not the ACLU? Why not LGBT causes? Why not blah blah blah?" I've got to fight

one battle at a time.

Q11: You've been vocal about your endometriosis, and Planned Parenthood was instrumental in treating that, right?

HALSEY: Yeah! In 2015, I had a miscarriage on tour, and the first place I went was Planned Parenthood. All the responses were like, "Well, if you have \$100,000 to donate, why did you have to go to Planned Parenthood?" Other people have controlled this negative narrative that it's a low-income place, this place in the ghetto, this place for abortions, this place where drug users go, this place where "slutty" girls go. I say "slutty" in quotes because I'm rolling my eyes at it. But it's a doctor's office. I can afford some of the best health care in the f*cking world and I still went there, because I trust it.

Q12: How do you handle the negativity that's constantly hurled at you?

HALSEY: When a society is inclined to get negative, that frequency spreads across everyone. Everyone's looking for a fight. There is a fight to fight, but some people are picking the wrong one and fighting people who are on their



side. And everyone has become a detective.

Q13: A detective? Is that related to “first” culture, where everybody races to be the first to post about a trend or controversy?

HALSEY: That’s completely what it is. Everyone’s goal is to be the one to find out that someone’s doing something wrong. A girl will post a photo of herself with braids and the first response will be “This is cultural appropriation. What the f*ck is wrong with you?” And the girl will say, “I’m half black”. Then the person’s like, “Oh, sorry. You look pretty”. We’ve become traumatised because so many people have actually committed cultural appropriation, but our instinct is too reflexive.

Q14: How did you navigate growing up biracial?

HALSEY: I’m half black. My dad managed a car dealership, wore a suit to work, had a nice watch, was always clean-shaven, handsome, played golf on the weekends. And people would come up to him like, “Yo, brotha! What’s up!” And my dad would be like, “Hi...”

Q15: How did that affect you?

HALSEY: I’m white-passing. I’ve accepted that about myself and have never tried to control anything about black culture that’s not mine. I’m proud to be in a biracial family, I’m proud of who I am, and I’m proud of my hair. One of my big

jokes a long time ago was “I look white, but I still have white boys in my life asking me why my nipples are brown”. Every now and then I experience these racial blips. I look like a white girl, but I don’t feel like one. I’m a black woman. So it’s been weird navigating that. When I was growing up I didn’t know if I was supposed to love TLC or Britney.

Q16: How do people react when they do find out you’re biracial?

HALSEY: White guilt is funny, but this is a really hard time for white allies. People don’t want to do too much but want to do enough, and in my bubble of Los Angeles I’m surrounded by a lot of good people with a lot of good intentions. But as I learned in this past election, my bubble is just a small fraction of how this country operates. That is ultimately my greatest frustration with the public perception of any sort of activism: the mentality of “Well, it’s not affecting me”. Open your f*cking eyes.

Q17: Your hallmark in interviews is being really open. Is that just your nature, the same way you’ve refused to censor yourself when writing lyrics?

HALSEY: Sometimes I forget I’m doing interviews and I just talk to people. I have a friend who has been in the industry a very long time, and he said to me the other day,

“Remember, the press is not your therapist”. Being an artist is so f*cking lonely, though. People forget that when I’m on tour, sometimes interviews are the only human interaction I get all day.

Q18: If it makes you feel better, often-times it’s the only human interaction for the journalist too. Are there things you’ve regretted divulging?

HALSEY: Sometimes I give pieces of myself to everyone that I wish I could take back. As soon as I have my first child, articles will say, “Back in 2016, Halsey came out about having a miscarriage, so we’re very happy for her”. I’ll be enjoying the happiest moment of my entire life, because I want to be a mom more than anything

If you told me tomorrow that I had to quit music but could have a happy family, I’d be like, “Sorry, guys, I’m out” and I know the press will ruin it.

Q19: What spurred you to reveal your miscarriage to the press?

HALSEY: Every time I read a miscarriage story, it’s about a happily married woman who loses a baby, and that’s f*cking terrible and I empathise, but I never read “A 20-year-old girl who’s scared and alone and single had a miscarriage”. And guess what that happens all around the world every day. I wanted to say something about it because when I was going through it, I was f*cking alone. I didn’t know any artists I could have called and said, “Hey, I know this happened to you. What should I do? Can I go back on tour? How long did it take for your hormones to realign?” I had no one to talk to.

Q20: You have open DMs on Twitter, and you’ve helped fans out financially when they were struggling. Do you feel a responsibility toward them?

HALSEY: It has made me empathetic, but it’s hard. I sign into Twitter and at any given moment there are a hundred kids messaging me: “My mom died. I hurt myself. I have an eating disorder. I’m failing school. My best friend committed suicide.” It’s amazing when I can be there for them, but that’s still energy I carry all day long. I love that it hasn’t numbed me. You can’t cry 15 times in a meet and greet, but I still do. I hope I never lose that, because having the capacity to care in that way keeps you a decent human being. That’s all I f*cking want: to be a decent human being. ■







Dee BOEERS



OCTOBER 1994

About me

I'm Dee AKA DJ Dstyle. As a little child I loved make up and clothes and of course high heels. I was really a girly girl and loved to be in front of the camera. So when I did my first shoot I was so d. And that's how everything began. My background in sports is gymnastics which I did till I was 18 and now I do fitness. Modeling and DJing are a passion for me. One of my biggest dreams is to become an internationally successful cover/magazine DJ and fitness model. My other dream is to have an acting career and my online sexy/clubwear/high heel clothing store. I started with DJ lessons in 2015 which is going well. I also started lessons on how to produce music and I'd like to learn how to become a freestyle rapper. I also hope to get involved with animal and children's charity associations and give something back to the animals and people that need help.

My hobbies and interests

Traveling and fitness

Goals and career ambitions

To become an internationally successful DJ and Playboy glamour and fitness model.

Who inspires me

Victoria's Secret models, Doutzen Kroes. For DJing it's Armin van Buuren and Martin Garrix and for fitness it's fitness Michelle Lewin.

My favourite quote

Dreams don't work unless you do.

Turns on

A gentleman that knows how to treat a lady.

Turns off

People that don't have respect.

Perfect date

A sunset candle dinner with a Swarovski lace dress and a man in a tuxedo.

My favourite food

Thai food/wok.

My biggest fear

Losing my loved ones.

One destination I'd love to visit

I love destinations with white beaches and that have blue sea water villas and jacuzzis.

Not embarrassed to say

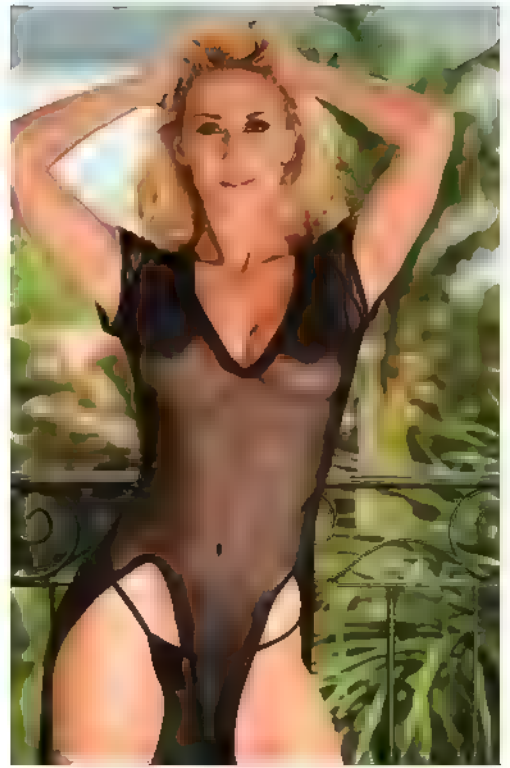
That I love to pose for Playboy and I love Pina Colodas.

Want to see more of Dee? Then you can follow her on Instagram @deedstyleofficial on Twitter @dee_dstyle or on Facebook at DJ Dstyle











YOUR STRANGER THINGS SURVIVAL KIT

THE OFFICIAL SURVIVAL KIT FOR THE TV SERIES
AVAILABLE NOW ON DVD AND BLU-RAY



TV

David Harbour's first days on the *Stranger Things* set felt like a real-life trip to the Upside Down. He thought the script for the pilot was the best he'd read in 20 years of film and television work, and he was ecstatic when the show's creators, twins Matt and Ross Duffer, cast him as Jim Hopper, the Chief of Police in the show's fictional Hawkins, Indiana. But at first, Harbour was a little too much like the neurotic lawman he plays.

I got into shooting and I was like, Oh God, I'm the worst! It's going to be a nightmare. I'm never going to work again", says Harbour. "My neurosis going in was that we'd be the first Netflix show to not have a second season."

Two years later, *Stranger Things* has 18 Emmy nominations and is one of the most popular shows on the streaming network. And it most definitely does have a second season, premiering October 27. Meanwhile, Harbour's reward for his breakout work on season one—which earned him one of those Emmy noms—is an even more bonkers storyline in this new nine-episode run.

And that's saying a lot. (Season-one spoilers ahead, in case you spent last year living under a rock.) We've already watched Hopper break into a local government facility where operatives perform secret experiments; there, he discovers they've opened a portal into an alternate dimension, which fugitive kid Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown), who has escaped from the same lab, calls the Upside Down. Hopper also helps Joyce Byers (Winona Ryder) find her son Will, who has been kidnapped by an Upside Down monster nicknamed the Demogorgon by Will's ragtag group of *Dungeons & Dragons* playing friends.

So yeah, stranger than that.

"Any ball you throw at him, he knocks out of the park", says Matt Duffer of Harbour. "So we just started throwing him crazier balls."

For fans, that first and foremost promises a resolution to the first season's cliffhanger, which sees Eleven seemingly disintegrate after a final battle with the Demogorgon. Later, Hopper leaves her favourite snack of Eggo's in the woods.

"As you can see from the Eggo's in the box, there will be a pairing of Hopper and Eleven", Harbour says, adding that the reunion "will really peel the onion back on what both of them struggle with".

The last episode of season one sees Hopper making a mysterious deal with the lab's head bad guy, Dr Brenner, that will surely be key to Eleven's fate. "Because of his involvement with the lab and

Brenner, and the deal he makes, Hopper has some understanding of what happened to her, how she still exists in some form out there", says Harbour. "And his saviour complex, which was awakened when Will was saved, sort of goes into this new other realm."

Whatever's in store for the next season, it will be grander and creepier than the first. "From the first five minutes of reading the script for season two, I was like, 'Okay, you guys are really opening up the world'", Harbour says. "It's bigger. It's darker. There's a relentless pace that I don't feel we had so much of last year."

"I felt we could push a little bit with some of the horror elements", says Matt. "I thought it could be a little scarier."

"At the same time", adds Ross, "what I love about the show that we tried to keep is that we can jump from a scene of pure terror to a scene of fun or romance. I love the juxtaposition of those tones, as opposed to having one big dark tone the whole way. In one scene, someone's crying; in the next, they're laughing."

The second season opens a year after the events of the first, which gave the Duffers a chance to take a different approach with the story. "You don't have a kidnapping within 15 minutes", says Ross. "So in some ways it has slightly more build up-front, and then it just goes crazy. Which is what we wanted, because we felt that in the first season, because it started with everyone on such high alert, it was hard to sustain that for as many hours as we wanted."

This second visit to Hawkins may give fans the opportunity to soak up more of the wide range of film influences and references the Duffers have brought to *Stranger Things*. Last season, the media focus was almost entirely on the show's most obvious allusions—Stephen King, Steven Spielberg and John Carpenter. But most fans don't know that the scene in which Hopper tears apart his apartment looking for a bug is a homage to Gene Hackman's final descent into paranoia in Francis Ford Coppola's 1974 classic *The Conversation*.

"It's funny, because the only influences people

talk about are the 1980s stuff", says Matt. "But we're just movie nerds, and *The Conversation* is one of my favourite movies."

In fact, the golden age of 1970s paranoia films Alan J Pakula's *The Parallax View*, John Schlesinger's *Marathon Man*, William Richert's *Winter Kills*—is a major touchstone for the Duffers.

"We fell in love with those in high school", says Matt. "I love the aesthetic and the storytelling. A lot of it's about the mood and this sense of dread that permeates every frame."

The Duffers also drew on everything from spooky video games such as *Silent Hill* to anime titles *Akira* and *Elfen Lied*. (The latter's story line has some eye-opening *Stranger Things* parallels.) One scene in the first season is a shot-by-shot remake of a scene in *Witness*, just because the brothers are huge fans of director Peter Weir. They

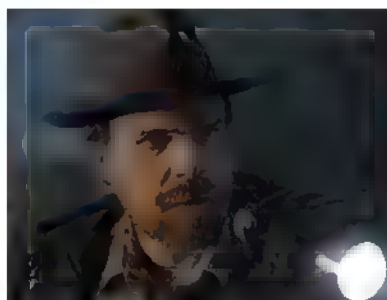
discovered composers Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein, who wrote the show's uncanny synth score, while watching director Adam Wingard's 2014 throwback thriller *The Guest*.

Incredibly, *Stranger Things* owes perhaps its biggest debt to director Denis Villeneuve's *Prisoners*. Like *Stranger Things*, the 2013 film's jumping off point is a child kidnapping.

"*Prisoners*, the pace and the tone of it, we thought could have lent itself well to an eight-hour story", says Ross. "This was around the time we started to see ads for *True Detective* and television was becoming more and more cinematic. That led to this idea: What if you had a child who went missing? And obviously then we added our childhood sensibilities to it."

"We married that with an interdimensional monster idea we had", adds Matt. "That started to get us excited, and then it went from there. But yeah, *Stranger Things* would 100 percent not exist without *Prisoners*."

Nor, it seems, would it exist without a widespread longing for a type of storytelling that once ruled the movies but succumbed to franchise fetish and CGI spectacle. Whether it's the fear films of the 1970s or the coming-of-age tales of the 1980s, there's a reason the Duffer brothers reached back into the cinematic past for inspiration, and a reason they struck a cultural nerve almost instantly. For countless viewers, the strangest thing is that the Upside Down feels like home.



David Harbour as Jim Hopper.



AMBER CONTANT

RANDALL ROBINSON PHOTOGRAPHY JASON FLEETWOOD

Bra: 32D
Waist: 64cm
Hips: 94cm
Height: 170cm
Weight: 54kg
Eye colour: Brown



She was born in Northern Florida to a military (USAF) family. Graduating high school in 2011 as valedictorian at the age 16, Amber went on to attend the University of West Florida in Pensacola, Florida, where she graduated Magna Cum Laude with a BS in Hospitality, Recreation, Resort Management. Shortly after graduation, she became Miss Pensacola USA 2016, as well as a contestant in the Hooters International Swimsuit Pageant. Amber was also featured in the 2015 and 2016 editions of the Hooters Calendar. While Amber still competes in bikini contests and pageants in her free time, she works full time selling orthopaedic medical equipment. She has also taken on a video game persona, Nikki Zole, which she uses to cosplay, stream on Twitch, and attend/host conventions. Modeling has always been a fun pastime of hers, but she has hopes to be published in a variety of big name magazines and travel the world.

About Nikki Zole

Nikki Zole is the alias I use for some of my modeling as well as my video gaming. You can find my twitch stream at www.twitch.tv/NikkiZole. I play a variety of video games including Overwatch, Skyrim, Dota 2, and Call of Duty, but I am always interested in trying something new. I also cosplay (costume roleplay), which has allowed me to be a guest attendee at a few conventions and events.

My hobbies and interests

Video games, exercise, modeling, travel, cooking, movies, music and singing, make-up, and living a healthy and happy, festive life.

My goals and career ambitions

While I already have my ideal career selling medical devices, my goal would be to become the top sales representative in the country. In terms of modeling, I would love to be featured in several big name magazines and eventually grace the cover of one.

Turn on

A good sense of humour and toned arm muscles.

Turn off

An overly loud and rambunctious attitude.

The perfect date

An opportunity to dress up, walk around an art district or unique downtown area, listen to live music, and have some delectable dessert.

My favourite food

Pizza. I like any kind, but my default order is chicken, pineapple, peppers, pepperoni, and extra sauce.

My biggest fear

While I am terrified of the thought of being alone forever, my biggest irrational fear is of large moths.

One destination I'd love to visit

The Greek Isles.

My favourite animal

Elephants.

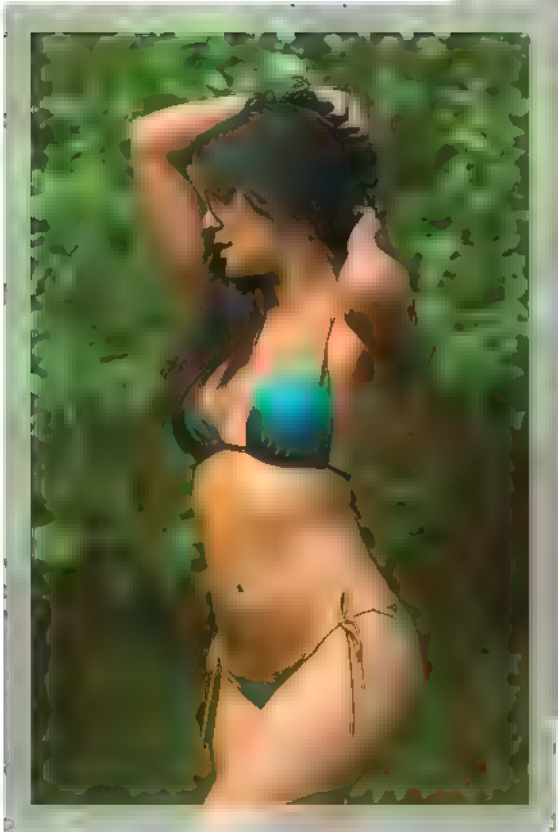
The most outrageous thing that's happened to me

I have been hit by lightning, and my father has been hit twice.

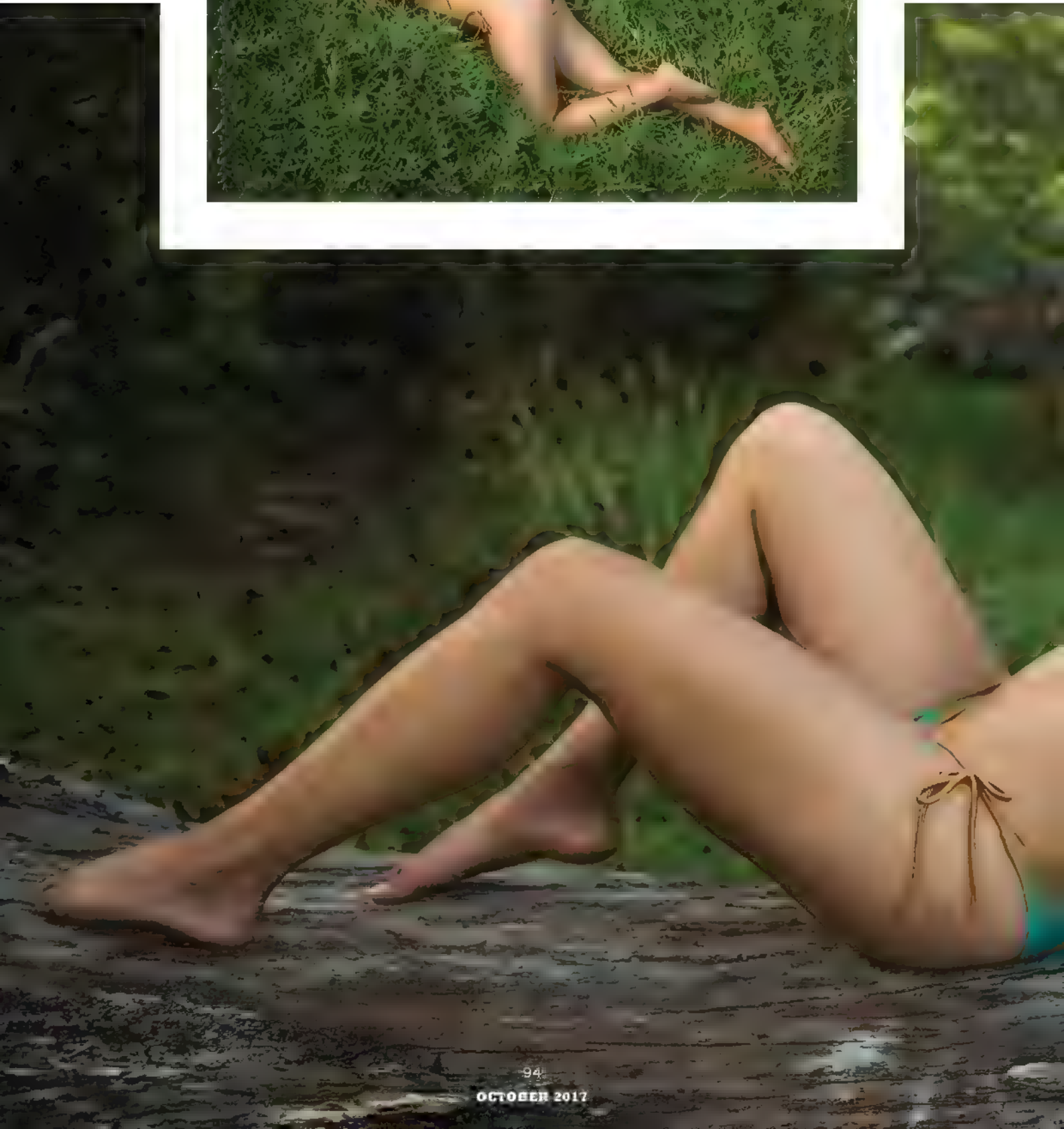
I'm not embarrassed to say

I am a HUGE nerd. I love to play video games, watch anime, and carry around my Pokéchu.

Want to see more of Amber? Then you can follow her on Instagram @nikkizole, on Facebook at Nikki Zole, or on Twitter @omgitsnikkizole and Twitch twitch.tv/NikkiZole.











PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

Everyone knows "Sweet Caroline" is a classic Neil Diamond song. But did you know it's also the technical term for a group of drunk white people?

My girlfriend doesn't like it when I play music during sex, or maybe she just has something against "Macarena".



Hey, girl, are you the current political landscape, because I don't know what you're doing but you're definitely terrifying me.

We don't claim to be experts, but a "Brazilian" just sounds like a whole lot of bras to us.

Football and sex are very different, of course. One is an athletic game with a lot of fumbles and turnovers before scoring, and the other is football.

If the band Heart had been fronted by guys, they probably would have been called Dick.

Living in a dorm room is the best way to figure out how close you're willing to be to two people having sex.

We wonder how many future fathers will go to the store for vape refills and never come back.

Don't feel bad about pressing the close door button when you see people running for the elevator. If they have that much energy, they should take the stairs.

If you bring a flask and share a shot with every man you see rolling his eyes behind his wife's back, shopping isn't so bad.

A museum of American history obtained the writing desk of one of their nation's most beloved literary figures, on loan. Apparently the new curator wasn't impressed: The sign for the exhibit reads "F*ck the poc lease!"

That sound you hear when you shove something in the freezer and close the door before it falls out? That's the sound of someone else's problem.

Her milkshake brings all the boys to the yard, and then they're like, "I only drink vegan, gluten-free milkshakes with fresh açai".

The novel *Catcher in the Rye* is not about a baseball player who likes swimming in whisky. I know this now.

Some guy's whining because the store's out of passion fruit LaCroix, and all I can think is that we used to hunt with spears.

What doesn't kill you probably will when you're no longer eligible for health insurance.

If you're not putting alcoholic beverages in your water bottle, can you truly call yourself a Little League fan?

It's strange how guitar solos are considered musical masturbation, but the only sound

masturbation makes is the sound of one hand clapping.

Did you hear about the guy whose safe word was Beetlejuice? Every time he had sex it quickly turned into an extremely awkward three-way.

Sex-ed curriculum circa 1997: Safe sex and family planning. Sex-ed curriculum now: Swiping strategies and dick-pic angles.

Boy: [kissing girl on couch] You wanna take this upstairs? Girl: He-he, sure, baby. Boy: Sweet! Grab the other end, and try not to scuff the bannister.



Shelby Neiman

You know it's a really good bar when there's a couple outside breaking up.

People say virtual-reality technology will revolutionise pornography, but there's nothing new about watching porn three inches from the screen. In the past, this practice was known simply as "watching porn".



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